

The **Vedas**

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THE HOLY VEDAS

Rig Veda Yajur Veda Sama Veda Atharva Veda



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Glossary

INTRODUCTION

The *Vedas* are ancient texts that are sacred in India and renowned the world over. The word *veda* literally means knowledge. The root is *vid*, 'to know'. The *Vedas* are thus texts that provide knowledge.

There are four *Vedas*, known as the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda* and the *Atharva Veda*. Many years ago, the *Vedas* were referred to as *trayi* or three. There must have been some point of time when there were only three *Vedas*. These are acknowledged to have been the *Rig Vedas*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda*. The *Atharva Veda* is believed to have been a later addition to the sacred canon.

The word *trayi* is also interpreted in a different sense. Although the interpretation does seem to be slightly artificial, it is following. The three paths to salvation are believed to be those of *jnana* (knowledge), *bhakti* (devotion) and *karma* (action). Since the *Vedas* teach these three paths to salvation, they are referred to as *trayi*. The *Rig Veda* is identified with the path of knowledge, the *Yajur Veda* with the path of action, and the *Sama Veda* with the path of devotion.

Each of the *Vedas* has two parts, a *samhita* and the *brahmanas*. The *samhita* part consists of *mantras* or incantations. These were hymns that were used in sacrifices. But these *mantras* are difficult to interpret without commentaries. This is what the *brahmanas* set out to do. They explain the hymns and indicate how these are to be used in sacrifices. The *brahmanas* also have detailed descriptions of sacrifices and how they are to be conducted. The *samhita* and how they are to be conducted. The *samhita* and the *brahmanas* are often known as *karma kanda*, that is, the part of the *vedas* that deals with rituals.

In addition, Vedic literature also includes *jnana kanda*. This is the part that deals with supreme knowledge. Included in *jnana kanda* are the *aranyakas* and the *upanishads*. These are identified with various *Vedas*.

We can therefore have a narrow definition of a *Veda* as well as a broad one. The narrow definition would take the word *Veda* to mean the *samhita* alone. The broad definition would include, in addition, associated *brahmanas*, *aranyakas* and *upanishads*. By the word *Veda*, we will mean the *samhita* alone.

When were the *Vedas* composed and who composed them? Strictly speaking, there is no answer to these questions. The *Vedas* were revealed; they were *shrutis*. They were not written down or composed. They were communicated by the supreme godhead or the divine essence (*brahman*) to the ancient seers (*rishis*). These *rishis* did not compose the *Vedas*; they merely obtained this divine knowledge through their extraordinary

powers. In this sense, the *Vedas* are *apourusheya*, that is, not the handiwork of men. Their authorship cannot be ascribed to any human author.

In the Hindu conception of time, time is divided into four eras. These are known as *satya yuga*, *treta yuga*, *dvapara yuga* and *kali yuga*. As one moves from *satya yuga* towards *kali yuga*, the power of righteousness diminishes and evil starts to rear its ugly head. To bring men back to the righteous path, the sacred knowledge that is in the *Vedas* must be disseminated amongst them. But the *Vedas* are abstract and esoteric, too difficult for ordinary mortals to comprehend. To make the dissemination and assimilation easier, the *Vedas* must be conveniently partitioned and divided into various groups. A person who thus divides (*vyasa*) the *Vedas* has the title of *Vedavyasa* or *Vyasadeva* conferred on him.

In every *dvapara yuga*, such a *Vedavyasa* is born to perform this sacred task. The *Vedavyasa* born in the *dvapara yuga* that immediately preceded the present *kali yuga*, was Krishna Dvaipayana *Vedavyasa*. It is he who is credited with having divided the original unified *Vedas* into the four segments of the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda* and the *Atharva Veda*. Krishna Dvaipayana *Vedavyasa* did not compose the *Vedas*, he merely recapitulated what was already known. Incidentally, Krishna Dvaipayana *Vedavyasa* is also credited with the composition of the great epic, the *Mahabharata*.

Just as it is impossible to determine who composed the *Vedas*, it is also impossible to determine when they

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were composed. Widely different dates have been suggested by scholars. Tilak suggested a date of around 6000 B.C., while Jacobi's date was around 4500 B.C. Most scholars would agree that the *Vedas* were compiled some time between 4000 B.C. and 1000 B.C. and that it is impossible to narrow down the range further. The earliest of the *Vedas* is clearly the *Rig Veda*. This reached a stage of final compilation between 1000 B.C. and 900 B.C.

The Rig Veda

The Rig Veda Samhita

It is first important to understand that there were four classes of priests who were required at any sacrifice, or *yajna*. The first class consisted of the officiating priests or acolytes (*hotri*). They invoked the gods by reciting the *mantras*, prepared the sacrificial ground and the altar, and poured out the libations. The hymns of the *Rig Veda* are for this class of priests. The second class of priests consisted of the choristers (*udgatrī*). These were the ones who chanted the sacred hymns and the hymns of the *Sama Veda* are for this class of priests. The third class of priests consisted of the reciters (*adhvaryu*). They carried out sacrificial rites while chanting the sacred texts and the hymns of the *Yajur Veda* are for this class of priests. The fourth class of priests consisted of *brahmana* overseers. They supervised the sacrifice and the hymns of the *Atharva Veda* are for this class of priests.

The *Rig Veda* derives its name from the word *rik*, which means a *mantra*. There are 10,589 verses in the

Rig Veda Samhita. These are divided into ten *mandalas* or books. Each of the *mandalas* is subdivided into *anuvakas* (lessons) and *suktas* (hymns). The ten *mandalas* have 85 *anuvakas*, 1080 *suktas* and 10,589 verses. There is also a *valakhilya* section or supplement. This seems to have been a later addition.

Let us now see what the *Rig Veda* has to say. Since the *Rig Veda* is fairly long, we will have to be selective. We cannot be exhaustive.

MANDALA ONE

(This *mandala* has 181 *suktas* and 2006 *mantras*. The bulk of the *mantras* are addressed to Indra. Agni comes next in order of importance.)

Agni

(Agni is the fire-god. It is to Agni that oblations in a sacrifice are offered. Agni is regarded as a messenger who summons the other gods to the sacrifice and carries the offerings to them. This particular hymn is ascribed to a sage named Madhuchhanda Vaishvamitra. He was descended from the famous sage Vishvamitra. Various hymns follow various metres and this one is in the *gayatri* metre.)

I pray to Agni. He advances to the front so that he can bring about the welfare of men. It is Agni who makes the sacrifice a success. This is a sacrifice that is being performed according to the rites of the season. Agni is the prosperous one. He will summon the gods to this sacrifice.

Agni has been praised by many sages of earlier times. He is being praised by the sages who are here now. May Agni bring the gods to this sacrifice.

Every day, men will obtain nourishment from Agni. They will certainly obtain fame, valour and riches.

O Agni! This is a non-violent sacrifice that is being performed. Make it successful from every direction. May we be able to attain the proximity of the gods.

You are the one who will summon the gods. You are the one who will ensure that the sacrifice is successfully completed. You are the one who inspires learned men to action. O Agni! Many are your forms and you are always truthful. You are the radiant one who has performed wonderful deeds. Agni has come to the sacrifice with the other gods.

O my beloved Agni! You ensure the welfare of those who give alms. You are the one who is present in every portion of our anatomy. The acts you perform are the ones that are truly righteous.

O Agni! We pray to you always, night and day. May we use our intelligence to come close to you.

You are the radiant one. You are the protector of non-violent sacrifices. You are the one who manifests the immutable truth. We bow in obeisance before Agni and come close to him. He will make our houses prosper.

O Agni! You are the famous one. We are like your sons; be like a father unto us. Grant us happiness and ensure our welfare. Aid us in our endeavours.

Vayu

(Vayu is the god of the wind. This hymn is also ascribed to the sage Madhuchhanda Vaishvamitra. And this too, is in the *gayatri* metre.)

O Vayu! You are the one who is fit to be seen. Come here. This *soma* juice has been prepared for you. Drink the *soma* juice and listen to our prayers.

O Vayu! The learned priests are well-versed in the knowledge of which days are auspicious and which are not. They have prepared the *soma* juice on an auspicious day. The choristers are singing your praise through their hymns.

O Vayu! These great words are being addressed to you. You are the great one. You are the one who grants boons. We desire that you may drink this *soma* juice.

O Indra! O Vayu! This is *soma* juice that has been prepared. Take great care in coming here. This *soma* juice wishes to be united with you.

O Vayu! You and Indra know well the wonderful properties of the *soma* juice. You are the ones who have an abundance of riches and foodgrains. Come here quickly.

O Vayu! You and Indra are the leaders. You are always in the forefront. Use your wisdom to come here quickly. Accept the *soma* juice that has been extracted.

I call upon the powerful god Mitra. I call upon the god Varuna who is the destroyer of enemies. Through

their benevolent wisdom, may they enable our tasks to be completed.

Mitra and Varuna are always connected with truth. They are the ones who enhance the truth. They will use the power of truth to make the sacrifice a success.

Mitra and Varuna are omnipresent. They are learned and powerful. They will provide us the strength that will inspire us to action.

(Although the hymn is basically addressed to Vayu, Indra, Mitra and Varuna also figure in it. Indra is the chief god of the *Vedas*. He rules over the atmosphere (*antariksha*), the intervening region between the earth (*prithivi*) and heaven (*dyuloka*). Indra kills the demons with his weapon *vajra*. In particular, he killed the demon *Vritra*. Mitra is an aspect of the sun that presided over the day. Correspondingly, Varuna presided over the night. *Soma* juice was extracted from the *soma* herb, the herbs having been collected by moonlight. The herbs were crushed to extract the juice, which was next purified by straining. The purified juice was mixed with water, milk and flour and offered to the gods).

Indra

(This hymn is also ascribed to Madhuchhanda Vaishamitra and the metre continues to be *gayatri*.)

O friends! You who are desirous of performing a sacrifice. Come here and be seated. Sing the praise of the great Indra.

When you are seated and have begun to extract the *soma* juice, praise the wonderful qualities of the great

Indra. He is the one who has destroyed many enemies. He is the one who is the lord of a lot of riches.

Indra will certainly grant us an abundance of riches. Indra will grant us riches and a lot of wisdom. He will come to us with an abundant supply of foodgrains.

When there is a battle, enemies are not even able to touch Indra's horses. His chariot cannot be touched. Sing his praise.

This *soma* juice has been extracted and pure curds have been mixed with it. This is the juice that deserves to be drunk. It will be united with Indra.

O Indra! You are the performer of wonderful deeds. You are the great one who drinks the *soma* juice. You become great so as to perform these wonderful deeds.

O Indra! You are the one who deserves to be praised. May the *soma* juice, which is a source of inspiration, be united with you. May it gladden your heart.

O brave one! You are the performer of several wonderful deeds. May these hymns enhance your greatness and increase your fame. May our words increase your fame.

O Indra! You have the unlimited power to protect. Partake of these offerings of foodgrains. In these offerings can be found all forms of strength.

O Indra! You are the one who deserves to be praised. May the soldiers of the enemy not be able to harm our

bodies. You are the lord of all that there is. Please keep the weapons of the enemies at a distance.

The Ribhus

(The Angirasa formed an important priestly family. In this line was born a sage named Sudhanva. Sudhanva had three sons named Ribhu, Vibhvan and Vaja. These three were collectively referred to as the Ribhus. Their deeds were such that they were elevated to the status of gods. This hymn is ascribed to the sage Medhatithi, son of the sage Kanva. The metre is *gayatri*.)

The learned recited the words of this hymn with their own mouths. So sacred is this hymn that it gives birth to a cluster of jewels. This hymn is addressed to the Ribhus, the ones who had divine births.

The Ribhus were very skilled. They trained two horses so that the horses could follow instructions given by signs. The Ribhus gave Indra these horses. The Ribhus will come to every sacrifice.

The Ribhus constructed a beautiful and swift chariot for the Ashvinis. They made the cows yield a lot of milk.

The Ribhus were righteous and straightforward in conduct. They travelled in all the directions and they made their aged parents young again.

O Ribhus! This *soma* juice is being offered for your pleasure. Come and savour it with Indra, the Maruts and the other gods.

Tvashta made only one ladle. But the Ribhus, with their skills, made four sacrificial ladles out of that.

(Tvashta was the architect of the gods. It has been suggested that the Ribhus were Tvashta's disciples.)

May the Ribhus be pleased with our prayers. May they come to our sacrifice and accept the *soma* juice that the priests have offered. May they grant us twenty-one types of riches.

(Twenty-one simply signifies a large number.)

The energy of the Ribhus rivals that of Agni. Through their deeds, the Ribhus came to be accepted as gods. They are entitled to a share of the oblations made at sacrifices.

Varuna

(This hymn is ascribed to a sage named Shunahshepa. He was the son of the sage Ajigarta. The metre in which this hymn is composed is *gayatri*.)

O Varuna! Other men commit sin. We are no different, we too commit sin. We violate your commandments every day.

Your anger is terrible. You raise your weapon to kill those who sin and those who violate you. But despite the sins we have committed, spare us from your anger.

O Varuna! A charioteer pacifies his horses when they are tired. Like that brave warrior, we use these hymns to pacify your anger. May you look upon us with favour and may you grant us happiness.

A bird flies here and there and finally returns to its nest. Like that, my mind and my heart roam here and

there in search of riches. (What is left implicit is that the mind and the heart seek refuge with Varuna after the pursuit of riches is over.)

Varuna is the source of all valour. Varuna is the source of all good fortune. Varuna is the one who sees everything. We desire to ensure our happiness. Who can we pray to but Varuna?

Mitra and Varuna are the gods who wish to elevate those who observe religious rites. They elevate those who give alms. Mitra and Varuna will partake of the oblations we have offered. They will never desert their devotees.

These two gods know the ways of the birds that fly in the atmosphere. They know the ways of the boats that travel in the oceans.

Varuna is the god who follows the proper rites. He is acquainted with the twelve months that bring prosperity to the subjects. He knows well the thirteenth month that comes in between.

(The twelve lunar months add up to 360 days. Therefore, a supplementary and intercalary thirteenth month has to be introduced every sixth year to bring conformity between the solar and the lunar years.)

Varuna knows the ways of the great and fast winds. He knows well the ways of the gods who rule.

Varuna observes the proper rites. He is the performer of excellent deeds. He comes amidst his subjects so that kingdoms may flourish.

He is the one who knows how extraordinary deeds are to be performed. He knows what has been done and what remains to be done. He is the one who sees everything.

Varuna is the son of Aditi. He is the performer of wondrous deeds. May Varuna guide us along the righteous path. May he increase our life expectancy.

Varuna is the one who wears a golden gown. On top of this, he dons clothings that radiate energy. The rays of the sun spread out in the four directions and are his messengers.

The evil ones who are assassins can bring no harm to Varuna. Those who bear hatred in their hearts can bring no harm to Varuna. Enemies can bring no harm to the great god.

He is the one who brings fame to mankind. He is the one who brings fruition to all action. He is the one who created our wonderful digestive systems.

Varuna is a witness to everything. When our intelligence is elevated, we wish to attain his proximity, the way a cow desires closeness to a pasture.

I have brought you offerings of honey. May these offerings be as beloved to you as the officiating priest himself. Accept this honey. And after you have eaten it, you and I will sit together and converse.

I have seen the god whose glory can be seen everywhere in the universe. I have seen his chariot travel on the ground. He has accepted my prayers.

O Varuna! Listen to my prayers. Make us happy today. We seek your protection. Grant it to us.

O god! You are the one who manifests himself through wisdom. You rule over earth, heaven and the rest of the universe. Listen to our prayers and grant us our wishes.

Remove all the bondage that we suffer from. Free us. And grant us long lives.

The Ashvinis

(The two Ashvinis were gods whose identities are not very clear. They brought light to the morning sky. They were probably two stars, one identified with the morning and the other with the evening. They were subsequently characterised as the physicians of the gods. This hymn is ascribed to a sage named Hiranyastupa, son of the sage Angirasa. The metre is partly *jagāti* and partly *trishtupa*.)

O learned Ashvinis! We are performing three sacrifices today. Come and be with us on the occasion. The two of you travel on a chariot that is huge and greatness characterises your generous hearts. You are as intimately connected with us as clothing is connected to the coldness of winter. Those who are learned can easily attain proximity to you.

The chariot of the Ashvinis bears honey and three wheels are attached to the chariot. (This is a reference to the three daily sacrifices that are held). Everyone knows that the two of you desire to partake of the *soma* juice. Three are the pillars that hold up your

chariot. And you travel thrice during the day and thrice during the night.

O Ashvinis! You are the ones who forgive all sins. Today we will perform three sacrifices. Come here and make our sacrifices overflow with honey. Morning and evening, grant us three offerings of foodgrains.

O Ashvinis! Come to our household thrice. Come thrice to your devotees. Come thrice to those who deserve to be protected. Come thrice and increase our learning. The two of you will bring us wonderful objects three times. You will thrice nourish us by bringing foodgrains and other objects.

O Ashvinis! You will come to the sacrifice thrice. You will bring us riches thrice. Three are the occasions on which you will protect and preserve our sacrifices. You will thrice bring us riches and foodgrains. Your chariot has three wheels. And the daughter of the sun sits in your chariot. (The Ashvinis were married to the sun's daughter.)

O Ashvinis! You are the ones who ensure the performance of righteous deeds. Grant us thrice, medicines from heaven. Grant us thrice, herbs from the earth. Grant us thrice, herbs from the water. Grant protection and happiness to our sons. Grant them a proper balance of the three constituents.

(The three constituents (*dhatu*) of the human body are *vata* (wind), *pitta* (bile) and *kafa* (phlegm). When these are in perfect balance, a person is well.)

O Ashvinis! You are the ones who deserve to be worshipped. The earth is the altar on which we perform

three sacrifices every day. Come on your chariot and be seated here thrice. You are the protectors of the truth. You may be far away. But like the breath of life that unites with the *atman* (the human soul), come and be united with us.

O Ashvinis! There are seven sacred rivers. The vessels have been filled thrice with water from these sacred rivers. The oblations have been divided into three. The two of you travel in the three worlds (*loka*). You are the ones who protect divine happiness during night and day.

(The seven sacred rivers were Indus (Sindhu), Vitasta, Asikli, Parushni, Vipasha, Shatadru and Sarasvati. The three *lokas* were the earth (*prithivi*), the atmosphere (*antariksha*) and heaven (*dyuloka*).)

O gods who ensure that truth prevails! Where are the three pillars that hold up your chariot? Where are its three wheels? When will powerful donkeys be harnessed to your chariot? When will you climb into your chariot and come here?

O Nasatyas! The oblations have been poured into the fire. Come here. Drink the sweet *soma* juice with your mouths. Wonderful are the decorations on your chariot. Before the onset of dawn, the sun sends your chariot to the sacrifice.

(Nasatyas is another name for the Ashvinis. Literally, the word means one who preserves the truth. Sacrifices were begun at the stroke of dawn.)

O Nasatyas! Come with the thirty-three gods to drink the *soma* juice we have offered. Grant us long

lives and purify us of our sins. Stay with us and purge us of all thoughts of enmity.

O Ashvinis! Three are the pillars that hold up your chariot. Bring us riches in that chariot. Bring us valour. We call upon you for protection and happiness. Increase our intelligence at the time of battle.

(The thirty-three gods included eight Vasus, eleven Rudras and twelve Adityas. This adds up to thirty-one. The remaining two are sometimes identified as Prajapati and Vashatkar.)

The Vishvadevas

(The 'Vishvadevas' was a general expression which signified all the gods collectively. Sometimes the suggestion however is that Vishvadevas were a special group of gods. In the hymn that follows, most verses are addressed to the Vishvadevas, although other gods are also mentioned. This hymn is important as it includes a phrase that is often quoted. *Ekam sad vipra vahudha vadanti* - truth is one, but the learned speak of it in various ways. The hymn is ascribed to the sage Dirghatama, the son of the sage Ouchathya. The metres that figure are *trishtupa*, *jaqati*, *praṣṭarapamkti* and *anushtupa*.)

Surya is the beautiful one. He is the one who rules over everything and sucks out the juices from the earth. The brother who is in the middle pervades everything. The younger brother has a radiant back and his back is sprinkled with clarified butter. I have

seen the one who rules over the world through his seven sons.

(Surya is the god of the sun. The three brothers are Surya, Vayu and Agni. Surya rules in *dyuloka* and is the eldest. Vayu rules in *antariksha* and is the brother who is in the middle. Agni rules on *prithivi* and is the youngest brother. The seven sons are Surya's seven rays with which Surya governs the world.)

Surya's chariot has only one wheel, but seven horses are harnessed to it. Although there seem to be seven horses, there is actually only one horse with seven names. The immortal and constant wheel has three naves. It is through this wheel that the entire universe is established.

(The seven horses are again the seven rays of the sun, which actually are but one. The three naves have been identified as the seasons autumn, summer and monsoon.)

Seven are the rays that sit astride the sun's chariot. Seven are the wheels and seven the horses that Surya uses to drive through time. Seven are the forms of speech that worship the sun. The seven sisters praise Surya in the four directions.

(The seven wheels refer to different periods into which time is divided. These are *ayana* (six months), *ritu* (season), *masa* (month), *paksha* (fortnight), *dina* (day), *rata* (night) and *mulurta* (roughly equivalent to an hour). The seven forms of speech are the seven major metres. The seven sisters could be these metres. Alternatively, they could be the seven sacred rivers.)

He who has no bones created all living beings that have bones. Did anyone see him being created? Where then were to be found the life, the blood and the soul of the earth? Who is the learned one who knows the answers to these questions?

(This refers to the creation and the one with no bones is Prajapati, the creator. The life of the earth is the wind, the blood is the water, and the soul is the sun. The sense is that these were not present prior to creation.)

I am the one whose learning is incomplete. Yet, with all due humility, I wish to know how the gods were created. The learned ones used seven different types of thread to create the universe that can be seen and lived in.

(The learned ones are the gods. They created the universe with seven threads - mind, life, earth, water, energy, wind and the sky.)

He who created the six regions of the universe is Prajapati. He himself was not born. Who can comprehend the nature of Prajapati? I am the ignorant one, but I wish to learn of this knowledge. I will resort to the learned for wisdom.

(Three *lokas* or regions have already been mentioned. There is a reference here to three additional regions that are above these.)

Surya is handsome and always mobile. Who knows of the origin of the sun? Let that learned one come here and reveal to me the knowledge. The supreme

rays of the sun suck up the water from the earth. The water is borne by the sun and is then rained down on earth.

The earth is the mother and heaven is the father. They had united to bring about the cosmic act of creation. The earth bore the foodgrains in her womb. May those who desire foodgrains worship the earth.

It is the sun's powers of preservation that bear up the earth. The calf saw the many forms of the cow in the three worlds and began to call. It was then that the seed was implanted in the womb of the earth.

(The cow symbolises the rays of the sun that create clouds and rain, and the clouds are the calf. The calling of the calf indicated thunder and then it began to rain. It is this rain that leads to the seed of foodgrains being implanted in the womb of the earth.)

Prajapati alone bears aloft the three mothers and the three fathers. He bears them, but is above them all. He is untouched by misery. He knows the universe and rules over it, but himself remains unattached. The gods who populate heaven debate about the nature of Prajapati.

(The three mothers are heaven, the atmosphere and the earth. The three fathers are Surya, Vayu and Agni.)

Twelve are the spokes (the twelve months) on the sun's wheel. Surya's wheel traverses heaven in the four directions. It never wears thin. O Agni! The seven hundred and twenty twin sons are always present.

(The seven hundred and twenty twin sons are the three hundred and sixty days and three hundred and sixty nights in any year.)

The father has five feet and twelve forms. Some say that he traverses the further half of heaven. Others say that the chariot has seven wheels and six spokes.

(This is difficult to interpret. The father is Surya. He traverses the further half of heaven, that is, the sky as opposed to the earth. The twelve forms are the twelve months and the five feet are the five seasons spring, monsoon, summer, autumn and winter. There are six spokes when autumn is further subdivided into early autumn and late autumn. The seven wheels are the seven rays of the sun.)

All the worlds are gathered together in the movement of the wheel with the five spokes (the five seasons). No matter what the weight may be, the axle of the wheel never gets heated. It travels perpetually through time, but never breaks.

The wheel with the axle is like the universe and moves all the time. It never breaks. When nature was created, the chariot began to be drawn by ten horses. The sun's radiance is shrouded in water and it is the sun who rules over all the worlds.

(The ten horses are intelligence, mind, heart, ego, the earth, water, fire, wind, sky and the soul.)

The seven elements were created at the same time. They have the same origin, that is, Prajapati. Six of these are connected to one another, like twins. They are like the sages who were created by the gods. In six of them, independent sacrifices are held, depending on the occasion. Although the seven elements function independently, they were created at the same time and have the same origin.

(This is difficult to interpret. The six who are connected to one another seem to be the six seasons, of two months each. The seventh element is the thirteenth intercalary month)

The rays of the sun have both masculine and feminine traits. He who has the eyes of learning can see this. He who is blind and ignorant never realises this. Learned sons know this wisdom and become so learned that they are as revered as fathers.

The cow (the sun) has borne her calf (the clouds) in the region that is below heaven and above the earth. Who knows where the cow travels? And who knows where the calf is born? This much is certain that the calf is not born on earth.

The earth is below heaven and Agni is the ruler of the earth. Heaven is above the earth and Surya is the ruler of heaven. Who knows where divine minds originate? He who knows the answer to this question is learned. Let him come here and tell us the answer.

The universe is in constant movement. That which is near today, is far tomorrow. That which is far today, is near tomorrow. O Soma! You and Indra have created the paths that you traverse. Along these paths, your steeds draw your chariots. Thus it is that all the worlds are pulled.

(Soma is a personification of the *soma* herb, but is also identified with the moon-god. In this context, the sun is being referred to as Indra. That is, the sun and the moon traverse paths across the sky).

The two birds have beautiful wings. They sit on the same tree and are friends. One of the birds eats the sweet fruit that grows on the tree. The other does not eat the fruit, it merely manifests itself.

(The two birds are the divine soul (*paramatman*) and the human soul (*atman*). The tree is the world. The *paramatman* and the *atman* are intimately connected with each other. The *atman* savours the fruit of the world, that is, the rewards of actions. But the *paramatman* does not savour these fruit. It remains a detached and passive spectator.)

The two birds with beautiful wings sit on the tree and pray for immortality with their words. May the learned one who is the lord of the universe impart wisdom to my ignorant heart.

The two birds with beautiful wings sit on the tree that is the world. They create all living beings and drink the honey that the tree provides. Sweet are the fruits that grow in the upper parts of the tree. But he who does not know the nature of the *paramatman*, does not get to eat these fruits.

Gayatri is established on *gayatri*, *trishtupa* is established on *trishtupa* and *jagati* is established on *jagati*. He who knows this, attains the immortality that knowledge confers.

(*Gayatri*, *trishtupa* and *jagati* are metres. But this verse is interpreted as follows. Agni (the first *gayatri*) has been established on earth (the second *gayatri*). Vayu (the first *trishtupa*) has been established in the atmosphere (the second *trishtupa*). Surya (the first

jagati) has been established in heaven (the second *jagati*.)

Riks have been composed in the *gayatri* metre. Many *riks* taken together, constitute *sama* hymns. Hymns have also been composed in the *trishtupa* metre. With different combinations of syllables, the seven major metres can be formed.

Surya is the speedy one. Through the sun, Prajapati ensured that there is always water in heaven. The sun is united with the earth through the medium of rain. It is said that the sun is like a verse that has three components. It is Surya who enhances the strength and greatness of Prajapati.

(The three components of the sun are heaven, the atmosphere and the earth.)

For the sacrifice, I call upon the cow which yields excellent milk. I call upon the person who will milk the cow with his hands. May Savita (the sun) grant me a plentiful supply of milk. May the containers for boiling the milk be heated.

The cow calls to her beloved calf. She yields the milk that will ensure prosperity and nourish the eight Vasus. This cow does not deserve to be killed. Milk will be provided for the Ashvinis. May the cow thrive so that prosperity is ensured.

The eyes of the calf are closed. The cow calls and goes near the calf. She licks its head and drags its mouth to her udders. The cow calls. Her udders are warm. She will satiate the calf with her milk.

The clouds have covered the sun's rays from the four directions. The clouds thunder. The lightning that is in the clouds roars. Through their act of showering rain, the clouds ensure that mankind thrives. Once it rains, the clouds shine in their glory.

The *atman* is always mobile. When life is over, the *atman* forsakes the physical body that is dead and enters a new one. The *atman* resides with the physical body, but is itself immortal. Through its powers, the *atman* moves all the time.

I have seen the sun which never falls down. I have seen the sun which travels far and near. I have seen the sun who is the protector. The sun is the one whose energy blazes forth in the four directions. The sun manifests himself in the world.

So vast is the universe that he who has created it does not know its full expanse. When the *atman* tries to visualise the universe, the universe seems to disappear. The *atman* is born in the mother's womb. It has many offspring. And although the *atman* is itself immortal, the physical body must eventually die.

Heaven has created me and heaven is my preserver. Heaven is like my brother and is the fulcrum of my being. This vast earth is my mother. Heaven and earth are like two vessels that face each other. The sun is between the two. It is the sun who implants the seed of foodgrains in the womb of the earth.

I ask you about the end of this earth. I ask you about the centre of this universe. I ask you about the origin of horses. I ask you about the origin of speech.

This sacrificial altar is the end of the earth. This sacrifice is the centre of the universe. *Soma* is the origin of all horses. The *brahman* (the divine essence) is the origin of all speech.

(The sacrificial altar is the end of the earth as it is the place that is closest to heaven. It is there that the gods come to meet men. The *brahman* is used synonymously with the *paramatman*.)

The essence of the universe is in seven sons. They follow their own paths according to the instructions received from the supreme godhead. The seven sons encompass the entire universe. There is nothing that is beyond their reach.

(The seven sons are mind, life and the five elements of earth, water, energy, the wind and the sky. Everything in the universe is formed out of these seven constituents.)

I do not know what the *atman* may be compared to. The *atman* is constrained inside the physical body, but the mind is free to wander. When the *atman* is united with the *paramatman* and realises the truth, it is then that I grasp the significance of these words.

The *atman* is immortal. But it remains with the mortal body through its own powers. The *atman* attains higher births and lower ones. The physical body and the *atman* are together, but their destinations are different. People can easily see the physical body. But it is difficult to visualise the *atman*.

The *paramatman* is as vast as the sky and as constant as the syllables of the *riks*. All the gods are to be found in the *paramatman*. What use are the *mantras* of the *Vedas* to someone who does not understand the nature of the great *brahman*? He who knows the *paramatman* is the one who is the most learned. He gets to sit in the most elevated of places.

O cows! You do not deserve to be killed. Drink the purest of water and eat the best of grass. May you have good fortune. Roam at will. May we also have good fortune.

The cow (here symbolising clouds) which gives water has thundered. Sometimes the cow has one foot, sometimes two, sometimes four, sometimes eight and sometimes nine. It is the voice of heaven itself that thunders in a thousand syllables.

(The clouds have only one foot when they thunder only from the cloud. There are two feet when the thunder is heard both from the cloud and from the sky. Similarly, the four feet refer to the four cardinal points and the eight feet to the four cardinal points plus the four intermediate points. Nine feet include, in addition, the zenith.)

From the cow, the oceans flow. It is because of the cow that the four directions prosper. The rains shower so that the entire universe can live.

From a great distance, I have seen the many forms of powerful smoke. (I therefore know that there must be a fire.) There the brave ones are preparing the *soma*

juice that is the source of strength. This is what must always be done before any major task is embarked on.

The objects with three rays can be seen, depending on the season. One of them is lit once every year. The second lights up the entire universe with its rays. The movement of the third can be seen, but its form itself remains invisible.

(The objects with three rays are Agni, Surya and Vayu. The flames of the fire were lit at the beginning of the year and the fire was not put out throughout the year. Surya's rays light up the universe. Vayu is the one who remains invisible, although the movement of the wind can be seen.)

Speech has been measured out in four divisions. Learned *brahmanas* are aware of this division. Three of these divisions remain secret and do not appear. It is the fourth division that mankind are familiar with.

(This is obscure, but the meaning seems to be as follows. The first division of speech is its origin. The second division of speech is when it reaches the heart. The third division of speech is when it reaches the brain. These three divisions cannot be seen. The fourth and final division of speech is when it reaches the mouth. This is the one that can be seen, or felt.)

Truth is one (the *paramatman*). Learned people refer to it by various names. Some call it Indra, others Mitra, others Varuna and still others Agni. It is referred to as Yama or as Matarishvan. It is also known as the golden-winged Garutman (a celestial bird).

The rays of the sun carry water up into the sky. The water next descends from the atmosphere in the form of rain. It is this water that makes the earth wet.

There is a wheel which has twelve bounds around it. The wheel has three naves and three hundred and sixty spokes. Only the learned ones know of this.

(The bounds are the twelve months. The naves are the three seasons of summer, autumn and monsoon. The spokes are the three hundred and sixty days.)

O Sarasvati! You are the source of happiness. Nurture us with all sorts of riches. You are the possessor of jewels, you are the one who grants jewels. You grant the gifts that ensure our welfare. May you look upon us with favour.

(Sarasvati was a river. It was only later that she came to be identified as the goddess of learning.)

The gods themselves worship the *paramatman*. The worship of the *paramatman* is the righteous path. He who follows this dictum achieves the best of worlds, where there is perpetual happiness. It is there that the gods dwell.

During the space of a day, it is the same water that goes up (into the sky) and comes down. The clouds satisfy the earth and the fires of heaven.

I call upon Surya for the sake of my protection. He is the one who was born in heaven and he is the one who is always on the move. He is the fulcrum of the water as he ensures that it rains. He nourishes the herbs and satisfies the earth. I worship Surya.

MANDALA TWO

(This *mandala* has 43 *suktas* and 429 *mantras*. Almost all the *suktas* are ascribed to a sage named Gritsamada).

Rudra

(The bulk of the *suktas* in *mandala* two are addressed to Indra. Then follow those addressed to Agni. But since we have already recapitulated *suktas* addressed to Indra and Agni, we now choose one that is addressed to Rudra. The Rudra of the *Vedas* seems to have been a god of storms. It was only later that he came to be identified with Shiva. Rudra is the father of the Maruts, who were gods of the wind. The hymn that follows is composed in the *trishtupa* metre.)

O father of the Maruts! Confer happiness on us. May we not be parted from the rays of the sun. May our warriors be able to vanquish enemies in battle. O Rudra! May we have many subjects.

O Rudra! You will grant us the herbs that bring happiness. With their aid, we will be able to live for a hundred years. May we be free of all thoughts of hatred. May we never sin. May the diseases that overcome the body maintain their distance.

O Rudra! Your riches make you the best of all objects that have been created. You are the one who holds weapons in your hands. You are the strongest of the strong. Preserve us from sin and ensure our welfare. May we never tread the path of evil.

O Rudra! May we never anger you through worship that is fraudulent. May we not anger you through the utterance of hymns that are improper. May we not anger you through mixed worship. Make our progeny strong through your herbs. I have learnt that you are the best of all physicians.

(Mixed worship signifies worship in which other gods are also invoked together with Rudra.)

Rudra is the one who is summoned through oblations and hymns. May I pacify Rudra through my hymns. He is the one who has a soft heart. He is the one who deserves to be prayed to. He is the nourisher and preserver. He is the one who grants us the best of protection. May we not fall prey to envy and anger Rudra.

Rudra is the strong one. He is the one who is associated with the Maruts. We seek Rudra's favour. May he satisfy us through foodgrains that provide energy. Those who suffer from the sun seek the refuge of the shade. Like that, we are plagued by sin and seek refuge with Rudra. May we be happy. May we be able to serve Rudra.

O Rudra! Your hands banish disease. Your hands grant happiness. Where are those hands? Lay them on us. Forgive us our sins and remove any impediments that the gods may cast in our paths.

You are the one who nourishes everything. You permeate all objects that are full of strength and energy. I praise you as best as I can. May the radiant

Rudra be pleased with our prayers. We chant Rudra's glorious names.

Rudra is the one whose body is firm. Many are his forms. He is the radiant one who nourishes. He is the one who is lit up through his energy. He nurtures all that there is in this universe. He is the supreme ruler. Rudra always has the power to destroy the demons.

O Rudra! You are the deserving one who holds bows and arrows. You are the one who deserves worship. You bear the metal gold, gold of many hues. You are the protector of this vast universe. O Rudra! There is no one to rival your energy.

O man! Rudra is the famous one. He is the one who rides in a chariot. He is as terrible as a young lion. He is the brave one who destroys enemies. Pray to him. O Rudra! Be pleased and confer happiness on your devotees. Let your soldiers not kill us, let them kill others instead.

O Rudra! A son worships his revered father. Like that, we are praying to you. We pray that you may be near us. You are the one who protects those who are righteous. You are the one who grants boons. May Rudra be pleased through our prayers and grant us herbs.

O Maruts! You are the strong ones. You possess pure and sacred herbs. Grant us the herbs that will ensure our welfare and confer happiness on us. These are the herbs that our father Manu accepted. These are the herbs that please Rudra and banish disease. We crave those herbs.

(Manu was the father of the human race, although there were several Manus. One of these Manus built a boat when there was an universal flood, and preserved himself in it. The *Mahabharata* states that Manu took some seeds with him into the boat.)

May we not suffer from Rudra's terrible weapons. May his anger plague others. O Rudra! Grant us happiness. May you not use your bow when you deal with us. Make our sons and grandsons happy.

You are the nourishers and the preserver of the universe. You are the strong and radiant one. You are the one who is omniscient. Listen to our prayers and do not be angered. Reveal to us the way in which we may please you. May we be blessed with excellent sons and grandsons. May we thus be able to perform sacrifices in your honour.

The Maruts

(This hymn follows the *jagati* metre.)

The Maruts are supreme in the field of battle. They are as terrible as lions and force enemies to flee. They are as radiant as Agni and their strength deserves worship. The Maruts are swift of feet. They are the ones who drink the *soma* juice. May the powers of the brave Maruts free us from the prisons of our enemies.

As stars adorn the sky, bangles adorn the hands of the brave Maruts. The Maruts are the brave ones who shower strength. They are like lightning in the clouds. O radiant Maruts! You wear golden necklaces on your

chest. O brave ones! The great Rudra gave you birth and the earth was your mother.

The Maruts make their steeds as strong as racehorses. They are the ones who thunder as they swiftly charge into battle. O brave Maruts! You are the source of inspiration. You are adorned with golden helmets. You are the ones who vanquish your enemies. You obtain foodgrains from those enemies. Come to us with your spotted deer.

(The relevance of a deer is not at all clear. The horses of the Maruts are probably being compared with deer.)

You are the ones who swiftly accomplish victory. You are the ones who possess spotted steeds. Your riches can never be stolen. You are the ones who follow the straight path to upliftment. You are always at the forefront of every deed. O Maruts! You are seated first at every sacrifice and grant foodgrains to our friends who are performing the sacrifice. You are the ones who shelter the entire universe.

O brave Maruts! Great is your inspiration. You wield flaming weapons. You are the radiant and energetic ones. You are the possessors of riches. You are the ones who deserve to be worshipped. You are the owners of cows. Come along the immortal paths to the sacrifice at which *soma* juice is being offered. Come here the way a swan returns to its nest.

O Maruts! You are the source of inspiration. You are the bravest of the brave. Our sacrifice is blessed with learning and *soma* juice is being offered on the

occasion. Come and bless our cows with an abundant supply of milk. Perform the acts that will ensure to your devotees unlimited foodgrains and beauty.

O brave Maruts! Grant us courageous sons who may ride on our chariots. May we be blessed with learned sons. May your devotees be blessed with the foodgrains that they desire. Please grant riches and intelligence to the warriors who are brave in battle. May their powers of endurance be increased.

The Maruts are generous in their gifts. They wear golden necklaces on their breasts. They will harness their horses to their chariots and come here. They will grant us prosperity. They will make our houses full of foodgrains. They will nourish us the way a cow nourishes her calf with milk.

O brave Maruts! You will establish us. There are men who are cruel as wolves; they are our enemies. Protect us from their violence. Surround them with your chariots, hurl your weapons at them. You are the ones who will make our enemies weep. Our enemies are greedy. They deserve to be killed. Slay them.

O brave Maruts! Everyone is familiar with your prowess in battle. You will bless us with your friendship. You are the ones who drink milk from the udders of cows. You are the invincible ones. May those who criticise your devotees come to grief. It is well known that you will bring destruction to the enemies who are attempting to kill the sage Trita.

O brave Maruts! You are the swift ones. You are the great ones. We call upon you so that you may ensure

our welfare. We call upon you so that our wisdom may be increased. We call upon you so that we may be able to perform righteous deeds. You are as radiant as gold. You are the superior ones. We pray to the brave Maruts for riches.

They are the brave ones who performed a sacrifice for ten months. May they inspire us at the time of dawn. The blushing rays of dawn encompass the dark night. May the shining rays of the brave Maruts encompass the entire world.

(The word that is used for the Maruts is Dashavgas. This literally means one who has performed a sacrifice for ten months. The Maruts are believed to have been the first ones to have performed a sacrifice.)

The Maruts are the brave ones who make the enemies weep. They scatter the enemies in all directions. They are adorned in yellow ornaments and yellow clothing. May the Maruts thrive in houses where there is no shortage of water. May they be beauteous and handsome. May they look upon us with favour and impart their strength to us.

The sage Trita called upon the five brave ones for his protection. Those were the ones who performed a sacrifice. (This is clearly a reference to the Maruts. But the number five remains obscure, the Maruts were not five in number.) We call upon those to whom the sage Trita prayed. We praise them for our protection.

O brave Maruts! Your powers preserve your devotees from sin. Your powers preserve those who pray to you from all manner of criticism. We pray to

your powers of protection. May your powers of protection preserve us. May wisdom come to us like a lowing cow comes home.

MANDALA THREE

(This *mandala* has 62 *suktas* and 617 *mantras*. Most of these are ascribed to the sage Vishvamitra or to his family. The bulk of the *suktas* are addressed to Indra, followed by Agni. But for the sake of variety, we will start with a *sukta* that is primarily addressed to the sacrificial post or *yupa*. The hymn is composed in a mixture of the metres *trishtupa* and *anushtupa*.)

Yupa

O tree! We wish to become like the gods themselves. On the occasion of the sacrifice, we sprinkle you with divine nectar (clarified butter). Whether you stand straight upright or whether you lie down on the lap of the earth, may you grant us riches on the occasion of the sacrifice.

O sacrificial post! You are the superior one and you stand up before the fire of the sacrifice. You are the one who listens to the hymns that are a source of valour. Banish all evil thoughts from our heads. Stand up straight so that you may bring us good fortune.

O sacrificial post made out of a tree! Stand up straight at an auspicious spot on the earth. The ground of the sacrifice has been measured out. Stand up there and energise the one who is performing the sacrifice.

The youthful sacrificial post has been wrapped up in excellent clothing and brought to the place of the sacrifice. Wonderful is the sight of the sacrificial post ever since it was erected. We are the intelligent and learned ones who, through this sacrifice, wish to become like the gods themselves. We have erected the sacrificial post.

The sacrificial post will increase in glory as the sacrifice proceeds through the day. The learned ones who are performing the sacrifice will sanctify the post through their wisdom. The learned ones who pray to the gods will chant hymns.

O sacrificial post made out of a tree! There are men who, by dint of this sacrifice, wish to become godlike. It is they who have measured you out. An axe has been used to fashion the divine sacrificial post. The *yupa* which stands upright is as radiant as the sun. May the sacrificial post grant the devotee subjects and riches.

An axe was used to cut and trim the sacrificial post. The officiating priests set it up on the ground. The post will purify the sacrifice. May the post grant us the best of riches on the occasion of this sacrifice.

Aditya, Rudra, the Vasus and the other gods traverse the best of paths. They populate the vast heaven, the atmosphere and the earth and increase love in these worlds. May the gods preserve this sacrifice. May they hold aloft the post which is the symbol of the sacrifice.

The sacrificial post is full of energy. It shines like the sun itself. When the post is set up on the ground, chips

are lopped off so that a stake may be formed. When these chips fall to the ground, it seems as if a flock of geese is flying in the sky. The learned ones have set up this post on the occasion of the sacrifice. It rises up into the atmosphere, the place where the gods roam.

The sacrificial post shines like the sun. Its sides have been lined with rings of iron before the pillar was set up in the ground. The *yupa* gleams like the horns of animals. May the sacrificial post listen to the hymns that are being chanted at the time of the sacrifice. May it protect us at the time of battle.

A sharp axe was used to fashion out the sacrificial post, so that our good fortune may be ensured. O tree from which this *yupa* was made! May you flourish with many branches. May we have a thousand branches, and prosper.

Usha

(Usha is the personification of the dawn. We now have a *sukta* addressed to Usha. The sage to whom this hymn is ascribed continues to be Vishvamitra. The metre is *trishtupa*.)

O Usha! You are the one who grants foodgrains and riches. Listen attentively to the hymns we are chanting. You are the goddess who deserves to be praised by all of us. You have been around for a long time, but you are always youthful. You are the wise one who permits the observance of religious rites.

O goddess Usha! You ride on a chariot that is as beautiful as the moon. You are the one who inspires

sweet speech. You are the manifestation of immortality. May you manifest yourself. There are strong steeds which have the hue of gold. May those steeds bring you here.

O Usha! You are at the forefront of all the worlds. You are in the loftiest of places, like the flag of immortality. You are the one who is always youthful. You keep rotating like a wheel. May you grant us prosperity.

Your radiant rays banish the darkness. You are the wife of the day which brings riches. You are the beautiful one who makes the day manifest. You are the one who grants good fortune. Your light spreads to the furthest extremity of heaven and earth.

O those who are chanting the hymns! The goddess Usha is manifesting herself before you. Bow in obeisance before her and chant hymns to her. She is the one whose energy can be felt in the loftiest parts of heaven. She is the one who is the source of all sweetness. Beauteous is her form. Radiant Usha is becoming manifest.

Usha is the preserver of truth. Her rays percolate through to heaven. Usha is the source of all prosperity. It is she who sustains the myriad hues of heaven and earth. O Agni! You are lit on earth and your flames spread upwards as if to greet Usha.

It is the powerful Surya who sends Usha at the onset of the day. Usha spreads herself in heaven and on earth. The energies of Mitra and Varuna bear Usha's rays in the four directions. Usha is golden.

MANDALA FOUR

(This *mandala* has 58 *suktas* and 589 *mantras*. Most of these are ascribed to the sage Vamadeva, the son of the sage Goutama. The bulk of the *suktas* are addressed to Agni. We however start with one that is addressed to the falcon (*shyena*). This falcon brings down *soma* juice from heaven. Agni, in his form of lightning, rends the clouds and brings down a shower of rain. The lightning is being compared to a falcon and the rain to *soma* juice. The metre in which the hymn is composed is mostly *trishtupa*.)

Shyena

When I (the falcon) was in the womb, I learnt the account of the birth of the gods. A hundred cities fortified with iron protected me. But I swiftly emerged in the form of a falcon.

(The context is that of the falcon bringing *soma* juice from heaven. The hundred cities of the gods in heaven were protected through iron fortifications. But despite these, the falcon managed to emerge with the *soma* juice.)

Those cities could not surround me well. I overcame the cities with my great powers. The *paramatman*, who is the creator of all that there is, destroyed the enemies. The *paramatman* killed the enemies who were as swift as the wind.

The falcon thundered in heaven when it grasped the *soma*. The learned ones who were the protectors of the

soma, tried to take it away from the falcon. The swift archer Krishanu strung his bow and let fly an arrow at the falcon.

(Krishanu was one of the guards who protected the *soma*.)

The falcon flew in a straight path. It brought the *soma* from heaven, despite the fact that Indra himself protects heaven. The falcon rescued the *soma* the way the Ashvinis rescued Bhujyu. In the fight that ensued, one of the wings of the falcon was cut off with a weapon.

(Bhujyu was a sage who was rescued by the Ashvinis from drowning. The fight and the weapon refer to Krishanu's shooting an arrow at the falcon. Krishanu has been interpreted as the demon of drought. He prevents mankind from enjoying the fruits of rainfall. The wing of the falcon fell off and became the *parna* or *palasha* tree.)

It was after all this that the powerful *soma* juice was kept in pots. The energetic *adhvaryu* priests mixed the *soma* juice with the milk of cows. The excellent juice was sweet and brought satiation. It was like food and brought bliss to the prosperous Indra. The brave Indra drank *soma* juice for his happiness. May Indra accept the *soma* juice.

Dadhikra

(This *sukta* is addressed to Dadhikra. Dadhikra was a mythical being, a bit like a celestial horse. The name is derived from *dadhi* (curds) and *kri* (to scatter).

Dadhikra has been identified as a personification of the morning sun. The rising sun seems to spread dew and frost and these are likened to curds. This *sukta* also is ascribed to Vamadeva and the metre is *trishtupa*.)

O heaven and earth! The generous Trasadasyu gave mankind many riches. All of these riches belong to the two of you. You have granted us horses that conquer the land. You have granted us sons who will make the land fertile. You have granted us sharp weapons so that we may triumph over the evil ones.

(Heaven and earth were regarded as the parents of Dadhikra. Trasadasyu was a victorious king. He was favoured by the gods, particularly the Ashvinis.)

Heaven and earth bore the strong Dadhikra. He is the destroyer of many enemies. He is the one who brings welfare to all of mankind. The energetic Dadhikra traverses a straight path like the falcon bird. The best of men have praised him. He is as swift and brave as a great king.

The god Dadhikra is as fast as water flowing downhill. He is the brave one who desires to triumph in all battles. He is the one who advances on his feet and is as fleet-footed as Vayu. Dadhikra is the one who inspires our chariots. It is him that all men seek to please.

He is the god who prevents riches from falling into the hands of the enemy at the time of battle. He is the one who travels everywhere and in all the directions with his riches. Dadhikra is the one who uses his weapons and

becomes famous in battle. He is the god who will vanquish the enemies of the best of men.

Men shout when they see a thief running off with articles of clothing. Like that, the soldiers of the enemy shout when they see Dadhikra's prowess in battle. Great are his riches and great his animals. Other birds flee when they see a hungry vulture descending. Like that, enemies flee when they catch sight of Dadhikra.

Dadhikra advances in the front. The wheels of his chariot plough through the ranks of the enemy. The handsome Dadhikra adorns his body with garlands, like women do. He bites at the bridle and his hooves raise a cloud of dust. (Remember that the image is that of a horse.)

The strong horse destroys enemies in the course of battle. He licks his body and serves himself. Swiftly does Dadhikra advance on the enemies. Straight is his path as the cloud of dust is raised. The dust is such that it blinds his own eyes.

So great is Dadhikra's prowess that enemies cower before him, the way they shrink before a stroke of lightning. The enemies are scared of his attack, as they know that it brings certain destruction. In the four directions, Dadhikra fights with thousands of enemies. And no one can stand up to the terrible one.

He is the swift one who fulfils the desires of all men. Men pray to his speed and valour. Warriors who advance into battle say that Dadhikra tore through the ranks of a thousand enemies.

Surya spreads his radiance throughout the atmosphere. Like that, Dadhikra's energy spreads through the five types of men. Hundreds and thousands are the riches that this powerful horse grants. May Dadhikra listen to our prayers and grant us sweet boons.

(The five types of men are priests, warriors, traders, artisans and slaves.)

Ghrita

(*Ghrita* is clarified butter. Although Agni and Surya are mentioned in the hymn that follows, the hymn is essentially addressed to clarified butter. The *sukta* is ascribed to the sage Vamadeva and the metre is a combination of *trishtupa* and *jagati*.)

From the ocean, waves of sweetness surged forth. These mixed with *soma* juice and attained immortality. *Ghrita* has a secret name. It is the tongue of the gods and the navel of *amrita*.

(*Amrita* is a heavenly drink that confers immortality. But that apart, the rest of the passage is exceedingly obscure. The ocean probably represents the sacrificial fire and the waves are the clarified butter that is poured into the fire as libation. The sense of the second part may be that *ghrita* pleases the tongues of the gods and is like a heavenly drink.)

We praise *ghrita*. May we worship it on the occasion of this sacrifice. May the *brahman* listen to the prayers that we are chanting. The buffalo (*goura*) with four horns created this universe.

(The buffalo is the *paramatman* or the *brahman*. The four horns are interpreted as the four *Vedas*.)

The god of the sacrifice (Agni) has four horns (the four *Vedas*) and three legs (morning, afternoon and evening). He has two heads. (The two heads are two ceremonies named *brahmoudana* and *pravargya*. At the *brahmoudana* ceremony, boiled rice was distributed to *brahmanas*. *Pravargya* formed part of the ceremony of offering *soma* juice. At this, fresh milk was poured into a heated vessel.) The god has seven hands (the seven basic metres). He is the strong god who roars at the three places where he is tethered. (The three bonds are the three components of the sacrifice, *mantras*, *brahmanas* and *kalpas*. *Kalpas* refer to ceremonies.) The god of the sacrifice is always to be found among men.

The gods discovered how the *panis* had hidden the three types of clarified butter among cows. The first type was created by Indra, the second by Surya, and the third type by all the gods from the energy of fire.

(The three types of clarified butter signify milk, curds and butter. The creation of milk is ascribed to Indra, that of curds to Surya, and that of butter primarily to Agni. The *panis* were robbers or malignant demons. They stole cows and hid them in caves.)

From the ocean, the sacred flow issues in a hundred streams. The enemies have not been able to see this flow. I have seen the sacred flow of clarified butter. I

see the radiant and golden Agni in the midst of this flow.

This flow of energy issues out of the heart. It is purified by the mind and flows like a river that is the source of happiness. The flow of clarified butter is as swift as a deer fleeing from a hunter.

The juice flows as swiftly as the water of a river coursing downhill. It is as strong as Vayu. The waves surge and the juice dashes like a strong horse. Great streams of clarified butter flow.

Wives who are good at heart happily unite with their husbands. Like that, the flows of clarified butter unite with Agni. The flames of the fire are pleased at the offerings of clarified butter. They rise upwards.

A sacrifice is held at the place where *soma* juice is extracted. It is there that flows of clarified butter are to be found. A bride who is about to be married, is adorned with ornaments and looks radiant. Radiant are the flows of clarified butter, as I gaze upon them.

O men! Chant excellent hymns for the gods. O gods! Grant us cows and victory. Grant us riches that will ensure our welfare. May our sacrifice attain the gods. Sweet indeed is the clarified butter that flows.

O *paramatman*! The entire universe seeks refuge in your energy. Your sweet juices flow in the ocean. Your sweet juices flow in our hearts. They are to be found in foodgrains and in water. They are to be found in the midst of battles. May your sweet juices fulfil us.

MANDALA FIVE

(This *mandala* has 87 *suktas* and 727 *mantras*. These are ascribed to various sages. The *suktas* are addressed mostly to Agni, followed by the Vishvadevas, the Maruts and Indra, in that order. We begin with a *sukta* addressed to the *apris*. *Apris* is a collective name for gods and deified objects. Many such deified objects were forms of Agni. *Apri suktas* were recited prior to animal sacrifices. The *sukta* we reproduce is ascribed to the sage Vasushruta, the son of the sage Atri. The metre is *gayatri*.)

Apris

O men! Agni is the learned one. His flames are full of energy and flare up well. Offer into the fire oblations of powerful clarified butter.

Agni is the one who is praised by men. May Agni inspire this sacrifice. Agni is the non-violent one. He is the learned one. His rays are full of sweetness.

O Agni! Be praised and offer us protection. Come to us on the chariot that brings happiness. Bring our beloved Indra here. Indra is the one who is strong.

O men! Spread out as seats mats that are soft as wool. The chanting of hymns has begun. O powerful seats! May you grant us riches.

O divine doors! May you open. May you be blessed with excellent qualities and may you grant us protection in the course of the sacrifice. (This refers to the doors of the sacrificial hall.)

O night and dawn! You are beautiful of form. You increase our life expectancies. You enable this great sacrifice to be performed. We pray to you.

O officiating priests! You are divine. May the two of you be praised. May your speed be that of the wind and may you swiftly come to this sacrifice that is being performed by men. (The two divine officiating priests could be Agni and Aditya, or Agni and Varuna.)

May the three goddesses Ila, Sarasvati and Bharati grant us happiness. May they be non-violent. May they come and be seated on the occasion of the sacrifice.

(Ila has been identified as the goddess of sacred speech and action. Sarasvati was a river, and so, a river-deity. Later, she came to be identified with the goddess of speech. Bharati has also been identified as a goddess of speech.)

O Tvashta! You are great and you are the one who grants welfare. Come here and nourish us on the occasion of every sacrifice. Grant us protection.

(Tvashta was a divine artisan and the architect of the gods.)

O *vanaspati*! You are acquainted with the secret places of the gods. Take our oblations to the gods.

(*Vanaspati* means a tree. But here, it seems to signify the sacrificial stake.)

These offerings are being made to Agni. These offerings are being made to Varuna. These offerings

are being made to Indra and the Maruts. These offerings are being made to all the gods.

Mitravaruna

(Mitra and Varuna are often addressed in unison and referred to as Mitravaruna. Mitra presides over the day and Varuna over the night. This *sukta* is addressed to Mitravaruna and is composed in the *trishtupa* metre. It is ascribed to the sage Shrutavidatreya.)

O Mitravaruna! The two of you have places that are always constant. That is the place where the sun's horses (the rays) are unharnessed and the true nature of the sun is shrouded in water.' (This seems to visualise an ocean in heaven. And the sun traverses this ocean.) One thousand horses dwell together. I have seen the beauty of those handsome gods.

O Mitravaruna! Wonderful is your greatness. One of you is always mobile and instils juices in trees and herbs. The second one nourishes the celestial cow with energy. One of you possesses a wheel that always moves.

(Both Mitra and Varuna were probably manifestations of Surya. But in this passage, Mitra seems to be identified with the sun and Varuna with water. The sun is the one who is always mobile and whose wheel moves constantly. The celestial cow is an image for clouds and these are nourished by Varuna's water.)

O powerful Mitravaruna! You are the ones who bear up heaven and earth through your energy. You are the ones who nourish and sustain trees, herbs and cows. You are the ones who grant boons with quickness. You are the ones who make rain flow in torrents.

O Mitravaruna! May steeds that are harnessed well bring you here. May the bridles of the horses bring you here. Your forms mirror clarified butter. You make rivers of clarified butter flow down from heaven.

(The rivers of clarified butter that flow down from heaven must be an image for rain.)

O Mitravaruna! You are the source of strength. You have been famous from time immemorial. You protect the earth in the way that *mantras* protect a sacrifice. You are the source of foodgrains. You climb into your chariot and come to the place of the sacrifice.

Your hands remove all impediments. You are capable of protecting us even when you are at a distance. You are the ones who do not cause violence to anyone. O Mitravaruna! The two of you combine to preserve righteous deeds through a sacrifice. May you grant us riches. May you grant us houses with a thousand pillars.

Beautiful is the chariot of these gods. The pillars in the chariot are made of gold. The chariot shines in heaven like lightning. The sacrificial altar has been measured out in an auspicious place. It has been sprinkled with

sacred water. May Mitravaruna come here on their chariot.

O Mitravaruna! When dawn manifests herself and the sun rises, you climb into your chariot. You climb into the chariot with golden pillars. From your chariot you gaze upon the earth and the beings who dwell here.

O Mitravaruna! You are the protector of the universe and the granters of excellent boons. You are the ones who cannot be vanquished by the most powerful of enemies. O Mitravaruna! Pure is your home. Protect us from that home of yours. We desire to obtain riches. We desire to plunder the riches of our enemies. Grant us these boons.

Savita

(Savita is a manifestation of Surya in his form of the generator. The *sukta* that follows is addressed to Savita and is composed in the metre *jagati*. It is ascribed to the sage Shyavashva, son of the sage Atri.)

The god Savita is great, intelligent and learned. Learned ones devote their minds and their intelligence to the worship of Savita. Savita is the one who knows the best of paths and the best of deeds. It is for that reason that he alone is the source of all fame. May Savita's praise increase.

Savita is the one who can see far into the future. Savita is the god who has many forms. He is the one who grants welfare to all bipeds and quadrupeds. Savita is the

superior god who makes heaven manifest. When dawn comes, Savita makes his presence felt.

All the other gods follow the path that is indicated by Savita. It is Savita who energises the other gods. Savita is the one who measures out the dimensions of the earth. Great is Savita's energy.

O Savita! You travel in the three radiant worlds. You are the one who is associated with the rays of the sun. You approach the night from both directions (rising and setting). O god! Such are your qualities that you befriend everyone.

O Savita! You alone are the lord and ruler of all the worlds that were created. You nourish the universe through your care. You are the king of all the worlds. Brave warriors who possess energetic horses chant hymns dedicated to you.

Parjanya

(We now have a *sukta* that is addressed to Parjanya. Parjanya is the god of thunderstorms and rain. The *sukta* is ascribed to the sage Bhroumotri. It is composed in a mixture of the metres *trishtupa*, *anushtupa* and *jagati*.)

The clouds are strong and swift. They thunder and grant boons. They instil juices into the wombs of trees and herbs. O men! Pray to the powerful clouds. Pray to them well. Pray to them through these words. And chant their praise in all humility.

Clouds lead to lightning and burn down trees. Clouds destroy demons. Such is the terrible fury of clouds that the universe trembles. Those who are evil are destroyed through the thunder of clouds. Clouds shower down rain and preserve those who are righteous.

Parjanya encompasses the sky with rain. Like a charioteer spurring on his horses with a whip, Parjanya spurs on the clouds to shower down rain. Parjanya's roar is like that of a lion. It can be heard from a great distance.

The clouds shower down the life force on earth. It is then that winds begin to blow. Lightning blazes and trees and herbs drink up the water. The sky itself is nourished. The earth and the entire universe is nourished and begins to prosper.

It is the acts of the clouds that make the land fertile. It is the acts of the clouds that make living beings thrive. It is the acts of the clouds that make trees and herbs grow. O Parjanya! May you grant us a lot of happiness.

O Maruts! Grant us rain from heaven. Nourish us through the showers. O clouds! Come towards us with your thunder. Shower down rain and make life flourish. May the clouds nurture us.

O Parjanya! May you thunder and roar. May you instil juices into the wombs of the trees. Travel in the four directions in your watery chariot. Overturn your vessels of water so that we may have showers. May

there be such a lot of rain that there remains no difference between mountains and plains.

O Parjanya! Open up your treasure-house of water. May the water flow downwards. May the rivers overflow with water and head towards the east. Fill heaven and earth with water so that the cows may drink their fill.

O Parjanya! When you roar and thunder, the evil ones are killed. Everything that there is on earth is pleased by your action. (The evil ones are the demons of drought.)

O Parjanya! It has rained for many years. Now withdraw your showers. You have made the deserts fertile. You have provided food for our delight in the form of trees and herbs. All the subjects have sung your praise.

Prithivi

(*Prithivi* is the earth and the next *sukta* is addressed to *prithivi*. This too is ascribed to the sage Bhoumotri. It is in the *anushtupa* metre.)

O *prithivi*! You are the possessor of excellent qualities. You are greatness itself. You satisfy living beings through your greatness. You are indeed the one who bears aloft the mountains.

O land! You are full of energy and you move in all the directions. You roar like a horse when you accept rain from the clouds. Your devotees sing your praise through the hymns that they chant.

O land! There are clouds in heaven and lightning streaks through them. It rains and it is your strength that sustains trees and herbs on the ground.

MANDALA SIX

(This *mandala* has 75 *suktas* and 765 *mantras*. Almost all the *suktas* are ascribed to the sage Bharadvaja and his family. The *suktas* are addressed mostly to Indra, followed by Agni. But we have already reproduced *suktas* addressed to Indra and Agni. Let us therefore start with a *sukta* that is addressed to cows. This is ascribed to the sage Bharadvaja, descended from Brihaspati. It is composed in a mixture of the metres *trishtupa*, *jagati* and *anushtupa*.)

Cows

May cows come to our homes and may they ensure our welfare. May cows reside in the cowsheds and please us. Many are the forms that cows take, many the hues. Some of them have calves. May the cows yield milk in the morning so that offerings can be made to Indra.

Indra is the one who enables sacrifices to be performed. He is the one who grants foodgrains. He is the one who grants riches. Indra never reduces the riches of one who gives alms; instead, he increases them. Those who wish to become like the gods are thereby protected at their homes.

Cows never perish. Even thieves bear them no hatred. The weapons of the enemies do not pierce cows. He who possesses cows uses their milk to make offerings to the gods. May he always have cows that yield milk.

May those who invade us on horses not be able to rob us of our cows. May they not be able to kill these cows. May the cows remain in the possession of he who performs sacrifices. May the cows be free from fear and roam the vast expanses at will.

Cows are wealth. May Indra grant me cows. The milk obtained from cows should first be mixed with *soma* juice. O men! These cows are nothing but forms of Indra. With great devotion, I pray for the proximity of the Indra who is in these cows.

O cows! Make us strong. Make those who are ill and lean, strong and handsome. O cows! You are the source of blessed speech. Make our households happy. Grant us food. May your fame be chanted in the assemblies.

O cows! May you have calves. Eat soft grass and drink limpid water from the ponds. May you not be stolen by thieves. May you not be possessed by sinners. May Rudra's weapons never pierce you.

May various objects which give strength be mixed with the milk of cows. O Indra! We have mixed milk with *soma* juice so that your strength is increased.

Pusha

(Pusha is a manifestation of Surya; that is, he is a solar deity. In particular, Pusha acts as a guide on travels and protects cows and other possessions. The next *sukta* is addressed to Pusha. It is ascribed to the sage Bharadvaja and is composed in the metres *gayatri* and *anushtupa*.)

O Pusha! You are the protector of all routes. You harness steeds to your chariot so that you may come and grant us foodgrains. May you come and increase the wisdom of mankind.

O Pusha! Grant us the riches that will bring welfare to mankind. Grant us brave sons who will be generous. Take us to households where the residents are generous of heart.

O radiant Pusha! There are those who are miserly. Change their hearts so that they may become generous. Traders tend to be hard of heart. Make their hearts soft.

Seek out the paths that lead to prosperity. Defeat assassins and enemies. O brave Pusha! May all our acts come to fruition.

O learned and far-sighted one! If traders continue to be hard of heart, destroy them with your weapons. For our welfare, demolish all these evil ones.

O Pusha! The *panis* are robbers. Bring misery to their hearts. May you desire to bring welfare to everyone. But destroy our enemies for us.

O radiant Pusha! You are learned in the usage of weapons. But others also display the same knowledge in the usage of weapons. O god! Bring wisdom to our hearts so that we may look upon everyone as an equal. May our minds be purified and may all thoughts of evil be banished.

O brave warrior! Your power is all pervasive and increases the number of animals we possess. May your wisdom be imparted to us. This is our desire.

O god! Motivate us so that we may serve our cows and horses. May we attain foodgrains as well as sons and grandsons. May we live in peace with the rest of mankind. May our hearts be directed towards that purpose.

Sarasvati

(The next *sukta* is addressed to Sarasvati. It is ascribed to the sage Bharadvaja and is composed in a mixture of the metres *gayatri*, *jagati* and *trishtupa*.)

Vodhryashvaya (a sage) was generous and patient. When he prayed to Sarasvati, the goddess granted him a son named Divodasa. Divodasa cancelled all his father's debts. O Sarasvati! Your wisdom is such that it destroys those who are misers and bring harm to others.

(Every man owes a debt to his ancestors. That debt is repaid only when he gives birth to a son. Once Divodasa was born, his father's ancestral debt was cancelled.)

This Sarasvati (the river) tears down the highest peaks of mountains with her torrents. Such is her strength that the mountains seem to be as delicate as lotus stalks. With sincere devotion, we pray to the goddess Sarasvati for our protection.

O Sarasvati! Destroy those who criticise god. Destroy all the subjects who are iraudulent and evil. For the welfare of mankind, grant us the land masses that are well protected. You are the one who grants foodgrains. You make the waters flow. You nourish the worlds.

The goddess Sarasvati is the source of all foodgrains. She is the one who grants foodgrains. May the one who protects our intelligence grant us protection.

O goddess Sarasvati! Indra prayed to you before he set out to do battle with the demon Vritra. Others too invoke you before a fight.

O goddess Sarasvati! You are the source of strength. May you grant us protection in the course of a battle. Like Pusha, grant us riches.

Sarasvati is the valiant one. She rides in a golden chariot. She is the one who destroys Vritra. She is the one who desires to listen to our prayers.

Sarasvati's waters know no bounds. They are swift and constantly on the move. The waters roar as they course.

Sarasvati will banish all our enemies. She is a lover of the truth. She will take us to her sisters, the other

rivers. Sarasvati's radiance is like the sun during the day.

Sarasvati is our beloved one. She is the one who deserves to be worshipped. The seven sisters are the seven rivers. Sarasvati is the one who deserves to be praised.

(The seven rivers have been named earlier.)

Sarasvati is the one who grants material wealth. She is the one who radiates energy in the atmosphere. May Sarasvati preserve us from those who criticise us.

Sarasvati resides in the three worlds (heaven, the atmosphere and the earth). She has seven sisters. She increases the prosperity of the five types of men. (The five types of men have been enumerated earlier.) She is the goddess who should be worshipped before every battle. She is the goddess who should be praised before every action.

Sarasvati is supreme among rivers in her greatness, her energy and her influence. Her stream is swifter than that of other rivers. Her flow is as vast as a chariot. The supreme creator himself gave birth to Sarasvati. Such is her learning that she should be praised.

O Sarasvati! Take us to the riches that we desire. May the flow of your waters not bring us any harm. May we not be denied your proximity. Accept our devotion and our friendship. Please ensure that we do not forsake you and go to others.

Dyavaprithivi

(Dyavaprithivi is a word that connotes heaven and earth taken together. The next *sukta* is addressed to Dyavaprithivi. It is ascribed to the sage Bharadvaja and is composed in the *jagati* metre.)

Dyavaprithivi is full of water and is the refuge of all the worlds. Vast is the expanse of Dyavaprithivi and sweet are the juices of foodgrains that grow there. Beautiful is heaven, and the earth never decays. Both these regions possess wonderful powers. Varuna is the one who decrees the rules that heaven and earth follow.

O Dyavaprithivi! The two of you are actually separate. You are full of water. You are full of milk. You ensure the performance of religious deeds. You are the source of sacred rites and clarified butter. You make this universe manifest. O Dyavaprithivi! Make the waters flow so that the welfare of mankind can be ensured.

O Dyavaprithivi! You are the ones who sustain everything. A man who devotes himself to the pursuit of a simple life is the one who becomes famous. One who lives according to the norms of righteousness is the one who is blessed with sons and grandsons. Many are the codes of conduct that emanate from you and they are all sacred.

O Dyavaprithivi! You are full of water. You have an intimate association with that beautiful water. You are great and you know no bounds. You are at the forefront to receive any oblations that an

officiating priest may make. Learned ones pray to you for the sake of happiness.

O Dyavaprithivi! May you unite us with the sweetest of juices. The two of you are the sources of all kinds of sweet juices. The two of you shower down sweet juices. The granting of sweet juices forms part of your nature. You sustain fame, sacrifices and divinity. Grant us strength, energy and great fame.

May heaven and earth increase our strength. They are like our parents. They are the omniscient ones who ensure the performance of the best of deeds. O powerful heaven and earth! You grant welfare to everyone. Grant us fame, strength and riches.

Brihaspati

(Brihaspati is not quite a god. He is divinity personified in the officiating priest. He is also the priest of the gods, and subsequently, their preceptor. The next *sukta* is addressed to Brihaspati. It is ascribed to the sage Bharadvaja and is composed in the *trishtupa* metre.)

Brihaspati is the one who destroys the fortresses of the enemies. He is the one who was created first and he is the one who ensures the performance of righteous deeds. He was born in the lineage of Angirasa and he is personified in the oblations made by warriors. Brihaspati is the one who protects the land through his excellent qualities. He is radiant with energy. Brihaspati is the strong one and he is like our father. His roar can be heard in heaven and on earth.

Brihaspati is the one who ensures the preservation of those who are righteous. It is righteousness that Brihaspati preserves in the sacrifices of the gods. He has killed the enemies, demolished their cities and triumphed over them.

Brihaspati wins riches from the enemies. He wins cows and cowsheds from the enemies. It is he who brings down water from heaven. Brihaspati is the invincible one. Through his powers, he destroys the enemies.

Weapons of War

(The next *sukta* is addressed to various weapons of war. It is ascribed to the sage Bharadvaja and is composed in the metres *trishtupa*, *jagati*, *anushtupa* and *pamkti*.)

Armour - The warrior dons this armour and goes forth to do battle. He looks like a cloud in the armour. The warrior will not be killed, he will attain victory. May the glory of the armour protect the soldier.

Bow - This bow will be used to win cows in battle. This bow will be used for the sake of victory. Fierce will be the battle, but the bow will triumph. The bow will nullify all the desires of the enemies. The enemies will be defeated and the bow will be victorious in all the directions.

The string of the bow - The string of the bow is drawn back upto the ear. It seems to be whispering something into the ear. The string of the bow is

extended on the bow. It makes a sound that is like the voice of a woman. The string of the bow will remove all impediments in battle

The ends of the bow - Like two co-wives who have similar minds, the two ends of the bow remain united in action. Like a mother carrying her son on her lap, the two ends of the bow cradle the arrow. The two ends of the bow help to pierce enemies in battle and destroy them.

The quiver - The quiver is the father of many arrows. It has many sons. The clanging of the quiver can be heard in battle. This father of arrows is slung onto the back. The arrows that come out of the quiver destroy the soldiers of the enemy.

The charioteer - An excellent charioteer sits astride a chariot and drives the horses where he wills. Marvel at the power of the reins. They take the chariot where one wants.

The horses - The horses are stronger than bulls. They are so powerful that they swiftly run with the chariot. Loud is the noise that the horses make. They attack the enemies with their hooves. Not retreating for a moment, the horses destroy the enemies.

The chariot - In the chariot has been kept fodder that will please the horses. In the chariot have been kept weapons for destroying the enemies. Armour too has been kept in the chariot. May I always be able to sit on the superior chariot that brings pleasure to the mind.

Defenders of the chariot - These are the ones who bring pleasure and aid. These are the ones who grant refuge in times of danger. These are the firm and strong ones, armed with the power of arrows. These brave warriors fight on the side of righteousness. Enemies can bring them no harm. Many are the enemies who are defeated by these defenders.

Various gods - May *brahmanas*, the ancestors, Soma, Pusha and Dyavaprithivi preserve us from sin and ensure our welfare. May those who traverse the righteous paths grant us protection. May the evil ones not be able to enslave us.

(This passage does not quite seem to belong to the *sukta*.)

The point of the arrow - The arrow has an excellent trail made of feathers. Sharp indeed is the point of the arrow. The string of the bow is made out of cowhide. And it is with this that the arrow is shot into the ranks of the enemy. There are battles in which warriors fight together and there are battles in which warriors fight singly. Whatever the nature of the battle, may the point of the arrow bring me pleasure.

The arrow - O arrow! May you follow a straight path. Protect me from the four directions and make my body as firm as stone. May Soma increase my inspiration and may Aditi grant me happiness.

The whip - O whip! You are the one who drives the horses. It is you who inspire the horses in the course of battle. You descend on the horses from above. And you lash at them from below.

The arm-guard - It twirls around the arm like a snake. It guards the arm from the lash of the string of the bow. The arm-guard is like a learned person who knows the secret of all action. May the arm-guard protect the warrior from the four directions.

(The arm-guard was worn on the archer's left arm and was fastened on with leather straps.)

The shaft of the arrow - The shaft of the arrow has been dipped in snake-venom. It is like the horn of a deer and a bit of iron has been fixed to the mouth. Parjanya himself has increased the strength of the arrow with his showers. I bow in obeisance before the god of arrows.

(The head of the arrow used to be tipped with deer-horn. Later, iron came to be used. The shaft was often made out of reeds and it was the rain that made the reeds grow.)

The arrow - The arrow has been sharpened by our knowledge. When one lets go, the arrow flies into the ranks of the enemy. May not a single one of the enemy lives.

The battlefield - Like a boy who does not have a tonsure, let the arrow fly where it will. Let Brahmanaspati and Aditi bring us happiness on the battlefield. May we always be happy.

(This is not clear. Brahmanaspati is the god of prayers and is sometimes used synonymously with Brihaspati. A boy who does not have a tonsure has not had his sacred thread ceremony. There are thus

no restrictions on his movements. And like such a boy, the arrow is free to go anywhere.)

The armour - I cover the delicate parts of your anatomy with armour. King Soma will bless you with the boon of immortality. Varuna will make you great and grant you the best of riches. May all the gods be pleased when you attain victory and may they work towards this end.

Gods - Those who want to kill us may be close to us, or they may be far away. They may be our inferiors. But whatever be their nature, may all the gods destroy them. I will be protected as I am armed with the armour of knowledge.

MANDALA SEVEN

(This *mandala* has 104 *suktas* and 841 *mantras*. Most of the *suktas* are addressed to Indra, followed by those addressed to Agni. All the hymns are ascribed to the sage Vasishtha, although his sons also feature in a few *suktas*. The first *sukta* that we choose glorifies Vasishtha and his family. It is composed in the *trishtupa* metre.)

Vasishtha

Those who belong to Vasishtha's family are fair in complexion. They are the intelligent ones who perform righteous action. They wear their tonsures to the right. Great is the joy that Vasishtha and his family have brought me. I arose from my seat and

told everyone that I did not wish to be separated from Vasishtha and his family.

(There is an interpretation that the above words are being uttered by Indra.)

The brave Indra drinks the *soma* juice that is offered in vessels. He comes from far away to drink the *soma* juice that is offered. *Soma* juice was also offered by Pashadyumna, the son of Vayat. But Indra preferred the *soma* juice offered by Vasishtha.

(There was a king named Sudas and Vasishtha was his priest. So Vasishtha offered the *soma* juice on behalf of Sudas. Pashadyumna was a rival king.)

Indra crossed the river easily and removed all impediments. Thus did Indra help Sudas in the battle of the ten kings. O Vasishtha! It is because of your prayers that Indra protected Sudas.

(This needs some explanation. The battle of the ten kings (*dasha rajna*) was a fairly important battle to which stray references can be found in the *Rig Veda*. Sudas was the king of the Tritsu tribe. He crossed the river Parushni (Iravati or Ravi) with Indra's aid and put his enemies to flight. Ten kings or tribes were allied against Sudas, but they were defeated.)

O leaders! Your hymns please the ancestors. I have driven the axle of my chariot. I have driven the chariot so that I can go home. (This "I" may be Indra.) O those who belong to the family of Vasishtha! May you be strong and may you not grow infirm. Recite hymns and be blessed with the strength

that Indra confers. Increase your strength and chant Indra's praise.

Vasishtha was like a man who was thirsting for water. He sang Indra's praise prior to the battle of the ten kings. Indra heard the hymns that Vasishtha chanted. He made vast expanses free for the Tritsu tribe.

The Bharatas were initially as small and insignificant as a rod that is used to beat cows. But Vasishtha became the priest of the Tritsus and the Bharatas. It is then that the Bharatas began to prosper.

(In this verse, the suggestion is that the Bharatas and the Tritsus were identical. Other parts of the *Rig Veda* indicate that this was not quite the case. Sudas was originally the king of the Bharatas, not of the Tritsus. At this point, the priest of the Bharatas was Vishvamitra and Vasishtha was the priest of the Tritsus. Sudas made Vasishtha his priest and thus forged an alliance between the Bharatas and the Tritsus. Vishvamitra felt slighted and formed a confederation of ten kings against Sudas. But the ten kings, who were led by Bheda, were defeated.)

There are three gods (Agni, Vayu and Surya) who infuse the worlds with energy. There are three types of subjects who are known as *aryas*. (These are *brahmanas* or priests, *kshatriyas* or warriors and *vaishyas* or traders.) There are three types of sacrifice that are begun at the stroke of dawn. Vasishtha is well-versed in all this knowledge.

O sons of Vasishtha! May your glory spread before the rays of the sun. May your fame be deep as the ocean itself. May your hymns reach the gods as swiftly as Vayu. May no one else be able to duplicate the hymns that you chant. It is only you who possess that special knowledge.

O those who belong to the family of Vasishtha! There are hundreds and thousands who labour hard to attain this knowledge. They strive to light up their hearts with this wisdom. To a person who has attained this knowledge, the entire universe is like a piece of cloth spread out.

O Vasishtha! Your energy flashed out like a streak of lightning. When you appeared from the lightning, that was like a birth and Mitra and Varuna witnessed this birth of yours. The sage Agastya introduced you to mankind.

(Vasishtha is believed to have been Agastya's younger brother. Presumably, Agastya introduced Vasishtha to the Tritsus.)

O Vasishtha! You are the son of Mitra and Varuna. O *brahmana*! You were mothered by the celestial nymph Urvashi. When you were born, divine hymns were chanted and the gods showered down their benediction.

Vasishtha is acquainted with all the knowledge of heaven and earth. He is the one who gives a thousand forms of alms. He is the one who donates everything. Vasishtha is the one who spreads out

knowledge like an open piece of cloth. Vasishtha was born of an *apsara* (a celestial nymph).

Mitra and Varuna were initiated as priests at the time of a sacrifice. They put their energy into a pot. From this energy, first Agastya was born. Vasishtha was born after that.

O Bharatas! Vasishtha is coming to you. Welcome him with due respect. Vasishtha will be your leader in the chanting of sacred hymns. He will be the chief of the *adhvaryus*.

Water

(The next *sukta* is addressed to water and is composed in the *trishtupa* metre.)

O water! You will enable us to obtain divinity. *Soma* herbs have been obtained from the ground, thanks to the generosity of water. Water has been mixed with the extracted *soma* juice and is being offered to Indra. The water that comes from rain is pure and free of sin. May this sweet water be mixed with *soma* juice. May we obtain this juice today. May we drink it today.

O water! Your sweet flow has been mixed with the *soma* juice. May Agni protect the water and the *soma* juice. Indra and the Vasus are pleased when they drink this *soma* juice. We wish to become like the gods themselves. May we too obtain the *soma* juice today. May we get to drink it.

Divine water performs purification in a hundred ways. It grants pleasure through the provision of

foodgrains. Divine water is used in the sacrifices of the gods. This is the water that preserves all of Indra's actions. Offer oblations of clarified butter to the water of the rivers.

With its rays, the sun spreads the water in all directions. Indra himself dug the routes along which water could travel. O water of the rivers! May your flow grant us the best of foodgrains and riches. May water always protect us and ensure our welfare.

Vastoshpati

(The next *sukta* is addressed to Vastoshpati. The word *vastu* means house and Vastoshpati is the god of the household. In the course of the hymn, he is also referred to as Indu. Indu is another name for Soma. The *sukta* is composed in the *trishtupa* metre.)

O Vastoshpati! May you look upon us as your own. Make sure that disease does not frequent our houses. Grant us the riches that we ask of you. Ensure the welfare of all bipeds and quadrupeds.

O Vastoshpati! You are the one who delivers us. You are the one who increases our prosperity. O Indu! May we be blessed with cows and horses. May we not suffer from old age. May you look upon us as friends. A father takes care of his son. Like that, you will take care of us.

O Vastoshpati! May we attain happiness and beauty through your blessings. May we get to attend your assembly. May we be counted as members of your assembly. You will grant us the riches that we

deserve. You will also grant us the riches that we do not deserve. You will protect all our riches and ensure our welfare.

Vishnu

(Vishnu was a minor god in the *Vedas*. He became prominent in post-Vedic times. In the *Vedas*, Vishnu seems to have been a manifestation of Surya. The next *sukta* is addressed to Vishnu and is composed in the *trishtupa* metre.)

O Vishnu! Your superior form is one that expands. No one is capable of fathoming your greatness. I know of the two worlds, heaven and earth, that you inhabit. But O god! There is also a world above all these that you inhabit.

O Vishnu! The furthest extremities of your greatness remain unknown. He who has been born does not know this. Nor will he who will be born, ever know this. It is you who have established heaven above. That is a beautiful sight, fit to behold. It is you who hold up the eastern frontiers of the earth.

O Dyavaprithivi! You wish to ensure the welfare of all of mankind. It is for that reason that you produce foodgrains and cows. O Vishnu! You have held aloft heaven and earth. With mountain ranges, you have made the earth firm.

O Vishnu! You have created vast expanses so that sacrifices may be held. O Vishnu and Indra! The two of you are the leaders. You have given birth to Surya, Usha and Agni. The enemies were strong and well-

protected. But you invaded and vanquished them in your clever way.

O Indra and Vishnu! The demon Shambara possessed ninety-nine invincible fortresses. But you demolished them. You killed the hundreds and thousands of soldiers that the demon Varchasvi sent.

This hymn of praise is indeed lofty. It is a hymn that has been composed in praise of the strong and valiant Indra and Vishnu. O Indra and Vishnu! I have submitted these hymns so that they may be chanted on the occasion of the sacrifice. May you provide us food at the time the battle.

O Vishnu! I have offered these oblations of foodgrains to you. O Vishnu! You are the energetic one. Accept the offerings that I have made. May these excellent hymns that I have composed add to your fame. Grant us protection and ensure our welfare.

The Frog Song

(Our final *sukta* from *mandala* seven is the frog song. This is composed in the *trishtupa* and *anushtupa* metres. What is remarkable about this *sukta* is the element of satire in the comparison of the priests to the frogs.)

The *brahmanas* who have been observing religious rites have been quiet for a year while the rites were going on. Now that the rites are over, they have begun to recite hymns. They are like the frogs which have remained quiet for a year, as long as it was hot.

Now that the monsoon has started, the frogs have started to croak.

The frogs lay there, in ponds that were dry. They seemed to be wrinkled bags made of skin. As soon as water descended from the monsoon clouds, the frogs began to croak. Their sound was like the lowing of cows that have calved.

One whose throat is parched thirsts for water. The frogs were like thirsty people. When the clouds gave rise to monsoon showers, the frogs started to croak. The sound of the croaking was like the sound of a father talking to his son. One frog went to another, and they gathered together.

One frog welcomed another, as the monsoon showers made them all happy. Once it rained, the frogs began to leap. A spotty frog leaped to a green frog and the two seemed to talk.

One frog seemed to talk to another. It was almost as if a disciple was conversing with his teacher. The frogs leaped on the water and croaked, and their bodies glistened and shone.

One frog croaked like a cow, another croaked like a goat. One frog was spotty, another was green. All of them were frogs, as commonly referred to. And yet they were all different. Distinct from one another. Many were their forms and different were the voices in which they croaked.

At the sacrifice named *atiratra*, *brahmanas* gather together. The frogs were like *brahmanas* assembled for

such a sacrifice. As soon as the monsoon made the pond full, the frogs gathered together. The first day of monsoon showers is earmarked for such an assembly.

Brahmanas observe sacrifices for a year. *Soma* juice is offered at these sacrifices and hymns are recited at the end of the year. The *adhvaryu* priests sweat as they chant the *mantras*. No one leaves the place of the sacrifice. No one stays hidden. The frogs were like these priests.

The leaders are the ones who follow the divine codes of conduct. They observe the religious rites in each of the twelve months. As soon as it rains, the frogs which have suffered from the heat, emerge.

The frog which croaks like a cow will grant us riches. The frog which croaks like a goat will grant us riches. The frog that is spotty will grant us riches, the one that is green will grant us riches. The monsoon indicates the advent of a thousand herbs. The frogs will grant us a hundred cows. They will increase our life expectancies.

(The frogs grant all these objects as they proclaim the onset of the monsoon. The rains revive the earth, and in this sense, grant all these riches.)

MANDALA EIGHT

(This *mandala* has 103 *suktas* and 1716 *mantras*. The *suktas* are ascribed to various sages. Most of the *mantras* are addressed to *Indra*, followed by those to *Agni* and the *Ashvinis*. The *valakhilya* section that

was mentioned in the introduction forms part of this *mandala*. In order to learn about gods other than those who have figured earlier, we start with a *sukta* addressed to the Adityas. Aditi is the mother of the gods and Aditya signifies 'son of Aditi'. Thus, Aditya is a general expression for all gods. But the word Aditya is also used in a more specific sense. There are twelve manifestations of Surya, one for each of the twelve solar months. These are the twelve Adityas. The *sukta* that we reproduce is ascribed to the sage Kanva and is composed in the *ushnika* metre.)

It is certain that a man who worships the Adityas and follows the rules indicated by them, will obtain riches and happiness such as have never been obtained before.

The path followed by the Adityas is a straight one and is free of all violence. The path indicated by the Adityas is the path that should be followed by mankind. It is the path that leads to happiness.

Ma'y Savita, Bhaga, Varuna, Mitra and Aryama (five Adityas) grant us the great happiness that we have been desiring.

O goddess! You nourish us along the path that is blessed with the best of qualities. That path is free of all violence and is full of love. You are the immortal goddess. Come to us with learning and come to us with happiness. Come to us with all the gods.

(The goddess in question is Aditi.)

O mother Aditi! Your great sons are free from evil and perform the best of deeds. They know well how

to banish the enemies who hate them. They know well the means of destroying sinners.

Aditi is the goddess who is never destroyed. May the pure Aditi protect our animals during the day. May she protect them during the night. May mother Aditi ensure the prosperity of our sons and our animals. May she preserve us from sin.

Aditi is the source of all intelligence. She will come to us with her powers of protection. Aditi will grant us peace and happiness. She will banish all our enemies.

The two Ashvinis are the physicians of the gods. May they grant us happiness and may they protect us from sin. May they banish our enemies.

Agni's flames and energies will ensure our welfare. Surya will radiate just the right amount of heat, so that we are warmed, but not burnt up. May the pure Vayu blow and grant us happiness. May all the gods banish our enemies.

O Adityas! May disease not come close to us. Banish our enemies. May we not fall prey to evil thoughts. Preserve us from all manner of sin.

O Adityas! Banish all our enemies and banish all our evil thoughts. You are the ones who possess all the wisdom that there is. Please make sure that those who hate us do not get to come near us.

O Adityas! You are the generous ones. Grant us the happiness that makes even sinners forsake the path of sin.

There are men who have become like demons and wish to kill us. May such men be destroyed through their own deeds. May such men not be able to come near us.

There are those who hate us and are treacherous towards us. These violent and evil ones are our enemies. May their sins devour them up.

O Adityas! You are the gods who establish everything. You know who are fraudulent and who are not. May you only reside with men who are pure of heart.

We desire to obtain the happiness that there is in mountains and in water. May heaven and earth protect us from sin.

O gods! You are the ones who establish everything. Grant us happiness and ensure our welfare. The chanting of your names will protect us from all sin.

O great Adityas! The sacrifice to which you wish to come is being performed. We are the ones who desire to be like your friends. May you look upon us with favour.

We call upon the Indra who protects the Maruts. We call upon the Ashvinis, Mitra and Varuna. We call upon Vastoshpati, the lord of households. May all these gods ensure our welfare.

O Mitra, Aryama and Varuna! O Maruts! Make us non-violent and grant us fame. Grant us three-storeyed houses.

O Adityas! All of us men will eventually die. But grant us long lives. May we live for many years.

Praskanva's Gift

(We next have a *sukta* from the *valakhilya* section. The *valakhilyas* were sages who were physically small in stature. In *mandala* eight, there are eleven *suktas* which constitute the *valakhilya* section. These eleven hymns are not included in *mandala* eight, but are placed after it, as a sort of supplement. Commentators on the *Rig Veda* have tended to ignore them.

The *sukta* we reproduce from the *valakhilya* section is called Praskanva's gift and is composed in the *gayatri* and *anushtupa* metres. It is ascribed to the sage Kanva. But there seems to have been a sage named Praskanva, who belonged to the Kanva family. He invoked Indra to aid a king in a fight against the enemies.)

It is Indra's great valour which becomes manifest the four directions. O Indra! You are the one who slices up all the demons. May we receive your bounty.

O Indra! There are a hundred white bulls in heaven. They shine like the stars in the sky. Indra has granted us these bulls, he has granted us a hundred bamboos. He has granted us a hundred dogs and as many soft hides. Indra gave us a hundred bundles of sacrificial grass and four hundred red horses.

O son of Kanva! (This is a reference to Praskanva.) May you become like a god and roam like the birds. May you roam like a horse.

O men! Pray to the Indra who is the lord of the seven regions that there are. Indra is the complete one and his fame is widespread. There are paths that are dark with the shadow of sin. One who has managed to cross these paths gets to see Indra.

MANDALA NINE

(There are 114 *suktas* and 1108 *mantras* in *mandala* nine. Barring a single exception, all the *suktas* are addressed to Pavamana Soma. Soma is the personification of the *soma* juice, and is also identified with the moon-god. Pavamana signifies 'that which is being purified. This refers to the purification of the extracted *soma* juice, to its being strained through strainers. To avoid repetition, we reproduce only one *sukta* from *mandala* nine. This is composed in the *gayatri* metre and is ascribed to the sage Vishvamitra.)

Pavamana Soma

The *soma* juice has been extracted so that Indra may drink it. O Soma! May you be pleasing to the palate. Flow in streams that will be a source of happiness.

Soma is the one who destroys all the demons. Soma is the one who sees everything. The place where

pots of *soma* juice have been placed has been made firm with iron stakes.

O Soma! You are the one who grants riches. You are the one who destroys powerful enemies. Rob the enemies of their riches and grant those riches to us.

Sacrifices are being performed for the great gods. May *soma* juice be offered at these sacrifices, together with foodgrains. May *soma* juice grant us foodgrains and riches.

O Soma! We serve you well. That is our desire every day. O Soma! It is to you that we express all our wishes.

Soma juice is extracted from *soma* herbs. It is then purified. It is poured through a piece of cloth that is spread out. It is Surya's daughter who performs the act of straining, an act of purification.

(Surya's daughter is *shraddha*, or respect. The implication is that *soma* juice is strained most respectfully, with faith and devotion in one's heart.)

On the day of the sacrifice, ten fingers grasp the *soma* herbs. The ten fingers of the hand are like ten women who are sisters.

The fingers bring the *soma* herbs. They extract the powerful *soma* juice from the herbs. Sweet is the juice and there are three types of power in it. *Soma* juice prevents all sorts of misery.

(The three types of power in *soma* juice are the powers to purify the body, the mind and intelligence.)

Cows should never be killed. They look upon Soma as their son. The milk from cows is mixed with *soma* juice and an offering is then made to Indra.

It is the pleasure that is derived from drinking the *soma* juice which provides Indra energy to demolish the enemies who surround him. It is the valiant Indra who grants riches.

MANDALA TEN

(*Mandala ten is the richest mandala of the Rig Veda Samhita. Most of the references that one finds to the Rig Veda are from this mandala. As a whole, the mandala has 181 suktas and 1754 mantras.*

We start with a dialogue between Yama and Yami. Yama and Yami were, respectively, the son and daughter of Vivasvana or Surya. They were thus, brother and sister. The *sukta* is ascribed to no particular sage. Yama and Yami are themselves referred to as the sages. The hymn is composed in the *trishtupa* metre.)

Yama and Yami

Yami tells Yama - In the secret places that are near the vast ocean, I would like to become your friend. I welcome you with an open heart. Prajapati, the creator, has made us and is like our father. He has desired that we may unite and have an excellent son. Otherwise, the human race will not multiply.

Yama replies - I am indeed your friend and your companion. But I do not desire to become your husband. You are my sister and a brother cannot marry a sister. Besides, this is not a secret place at all. There are the sons of the demons, who are mighty and strong. They are everywhere and see all that happens on heaven and earth.

Yami says - You may be right. Such an union, between a brother and a sister may be forbidden among men. But such an union is not frowned upon or discouraged by the gods. I wish to become your wife, do not refuse me. Become my husband and grant me a son that I may bear in my womb.

Yama replies - I have never done anything like this before. I always follow the path of truth. I have never lied. Our parents are the *gandharvas* (a semi-divine species) in heaven, the Adityas who rule over the water, and the great Pusha. They are our best friends. What you propose is not proper, as our parents would disapprove of such an union.

Yami says - The great god Tvashta is the creator of all that there is. He is everywhere and bears up everything. It is Tvashta himself who decreed that we should be man and wife; for, there is no one else. How can one go against the wishes of that great creator? Heaven and earth will approve of our marriage.

Yama replies - Who knows the secrets of the first day of creation? Who knows how the universe was created? Who knows what relationships are sanctioned? But what you propose is a sin. It will lead

to a downfall of the world that Mitra and Varuna preside over.

Yami says - All that I know is that I want you to become my husband. We will be like the two wheels of a chariot, united in action. Let us be man and wife.

Yama replies The spies of the gods roam throughout the world, night and day. They never rest in one place, their eyes are never closed. If we commit a sin, it will not escape them. You will bring unhappiness to both of us. Go to some other man. You and he can be like the two wheels of a chariot. Establish a relationship with him.

Yami says - Let night and day grant us what we desire. Let the energy of the sun grant Yama what he wants. Heaven and earth know that there is no one but the pair of us. May Yami become Yama's wife. There is no sin in this.

Yama replies - Perhaps there will be some era in the future, when a brother may become his sister's husband. But that day has not come. O beautiful one! Wish for someone else as your husband. Seek refuge with another.

Yami says - What sort of a brother do I have? He cannot even satisfy his sister's wishes. What sort of a sister am I? I am forced to be unhappy, even though I have a brother to succour me. Many are the words I have uttered. I love you. Marry me.

Yama replies - Unfortunately, it is also true that I do not wish to marry you. A brother who marries a sister

commits a sin. Leave me alone. Go to some other man and find your pleasure with him. O beautiful one! Your brother does not wish to become your husband.

Yami says - O Yama! You are indeed weak. I have not been able to fathom what goes on in your mind. Do you have some other wife? Has some other woman tied you up, the way a horse is tied up with a noose? Like a creeper entwines itself around a tree, has some other woman embraced you?

Yama replies - O Yami! Go and embrace some other man like a creeper embracing a tree. May some other man embrace you. May you be able to charm his mind. May he be able to charm you. May you be happy with him.

Havirdhanas

(The next *sukta* is addressed to the Havirdhanas. Two *shakatas* or carts were used at sacrifices to carry offerings, for example, *soma* herbs. These carts were known as the *Havirdhanas*. The *sukta* is composed in the *trishtupa* and *jagati* metres. It is not clear to which sage the *sukta* is ascribed, but he seems to have belonged to the Angirasa family.)

O carts! These *mantras* originated many years ago. I utter the *mantras* and place foodgrains and other sacrificial offerings on you. I take you to the place of the sacrifice. My hymns are like the oblations. May they attain the gods. The gods are the sons of the great creator. They live in divine places. May the gods listen to my prayers.

The two carts are taken to the place of sacrifice together. Men who are devoted to the gods place oblations on the carts. You (the carts) know the place where you are supposed to stand. You are the excellent stands on which *soma* juice is placed.

There are five steps that lead to the sacrifice. May I climb each of the steps. Four of these are *trishtupa* and other metres in which hymns are composed. The fifth step is the sacred syllable *om*, to whose chanting I perform the sacrifice. On the altar of the sacrifice is placed the purified *soma* juice.

For the sake of the gods, may death be banished. May the immortal life that all living beings are entitled to, not be destroyed. The officiating priests are performing the sacrifice to the chanting of sacred hymns. May the nooses of death not be able to encompass our physical bodies.

Soma juice is like our father. It deserves to be praised. It is from *soma* juice that the seven basic metres emanate. The choristers are chanting the hymns. The two carts shine in heaven and on earth. The two carts try to nourish men and gods.

Manasa

(*Manasa* means spirit. This hymn is addressed to the spirit of a man who is about to die. It attempts to call the spirit back. The *sukta* is composed in the *anushtupa* metre. It is ascribed to sages named Shrutabandhu, Viprabandhu and Gopayana.)

Your spirit has gone far away. Yama is the son of Vivasvana. Your spirit has gone to Yama. May your spirit come back. You have been born so that you may live in this world.

Your spirit has gone far away. It has gone near heaven and the earth. May your spirit return. You have been born so that you may live in this world.

Your spirit has gone far away. It has reached the earth which is heated from the four directions. (This suggests the desert.) May your spirit return. You have been born so that you may live in this world.

Your spirit has gone far away in the four directions. May your spirit return. You have been born so that you may live in this world.

Your spirit has gone far away. It has reached the water of the ocean. May your spirit return. You have been born so that you may live in this world.

Your spirit has gone far away. It has reached the rays that radiate out in the four directions. May your spirit return. You have been born so that you may live in this world.

Your spirit has gone far away. It has reached the water, the trees and the herbs. May your spirit return. You have been born so that you may live in this world.

Your spirit has gone far away. It has reached the sun and the dawn. May your spirit return. You have been born so that you may live in this world.

Your spirit has gone far away. It has reached the lofty mountains. May your spirit return. You have been born so that you may live in this world.

Your spirit has gone far away, beyond the portals of this world. May your spirit return. You have been born so that you may live in this world.

Your spirit has gone far away, as far away as is possible to imagine. May your spirit return. You have been born so that you may live in this world.

Your spirit has gone far away. It has reached the past and the future. May your spirit return. You have been born so that you may live in this world.

Rivers

(The next *sukta* is addressed to rivers. It is composed in the *jagati* metre and is ascribed to the sage Preyamedha.)

O waters! I sing hymns in praise of your greatness. I chant them at the house of the one who is performing the sacrifice. Twenty-one are the rivers that flow, seven for each of the three worlds. The most famous of all these rivers is the Sindhu (Indus). It is the greatest.

O Sindhu! When you headed for the fertile plains, Varuna himself charted out a path for you. Excellent is the course that you follow. You are the source of life for all living beings.

The thunder of your roar is heard in the sky, above the earth. Your waters shine as they speed past. The

river Sindhu thunders like a bull. The sound it makes is like the clouds thundering before the onset of showers. It has been said that the Sindhu roars in the sky before descending on earth.

O Sindhu! A mother goes to her son with love in her heart. A cow goes to a calf that has just been born, to offer it milk. Like that, other rivers head towards a confluence with the Sindhu. You are the leader of the rivers, like a king is the leader of his army. You are foremost among all the rivers.

O Ganga! O Yamuna! O Sarasvati! O Shutudri! (The Shutudri is the Sutlej.) O Parushni! O Asikli! (The Asikli is the Chandrabhaga or the Chenab.) O Marudvridha! (This river has not been identified.) O Vitasta! (The Vitasta is the Jhelum.) O Sushoma! (The Sushoma is said to be another name for the Sindhu.) O Arjikiya! (The Arjikiya has been identified as the Vipasha or the Beas.) O Sindhu! May you and the other seven rivers listen to our prayers.

(Originally, there were seven rivers including the Sindhu. Moreover, in addition to the Sindhu, nine rivers are mentioned in the above passage.)

O Sindhu! You wish to unite with the fast-flowing Gomati river. But first you unite with the river named Tushtama. Then you unite with the rivers Susartu, Shveti, Kubha and Mehatnu. You unite with them, as if you are riding on the same chariot with them.

White are the waters of the Sindhu and they flow straight ahead. Fast is the Sindhu and its speed

cannot be stemmed. The river is like a fleet-footed stallion. It is as handsome as a beautiful woman.

Sindhu possesses excellent horses, beautiful chariots, handsome clothing and golden ornaments. Its water is pure and it abounds in aquatic plants. Flowering trees line its banks.

Sindhu possesses a chariot that brings happiness. To this chariot, steeds are harnessed. Sindhu will bring us foodgrains in that chariot. The praise of the river is chanted at the time of a battle or a sacrifice. Great and famous is Sindhu's chariot. It performs no violent deeds.

Vishvakarma

(The next *sukta* is addressed to Vishvakarma. Vishvakarma is regarded as the creator of the universe. Later, he came to be regarded as the architect of the gods. The *sukta* is composed in the *trishtupa* metre and is ascribed to the sage Bhoulvana.)

Vishvakarma was the first priest. He performed a sacrifice so that all the worlds and all the riches could be created. He offered oblations to Agni and to himself. He is our father. Vishvakarma recited hymns so that the riches that are typified in heaven might be created. First, he created the universe. Next, he merged into Agni.

Where was Vishvakarma at the time of creation? What did he look like then? Where did he start his act of creation? How did he go about the task? Who

knows why Vishvakarma created the land masses of the earth? Why did he create the vast expanse of the sky? Who knows the answers to these questions?

Vishvakarma is the *paramatman*. He is omniscient. His mouths, his arms, and his feet are everywhere. It is this *paramatman* who created the three worlds. With his own hands and feet, he created heaven and earth at the same time. He is the single and supreme godhead who oversees the functioning of the universe.

What was the forest and what the trees with which heaven and earth were fashioned? O learned one! Search in your mind to see if you know the answer to this question. Think of the place where the supreme godhead resides. It is there that he bears up the entire universe.

O Vishvakarma! You are the supreme creator. You have a superior body, you have a medium body, and you have an inferior body. May all these bodies make the elements our friends. May water be mixed with your body to generate foodgrains. May we obtain these foodgrains.

O Vishvakarma! The oblations increase your strength. Through your power and wisdom, you bear up heaven and earth. May oblations be offered to heaven and earth at the time of sacrifices. Those who do not perform sacrifices according to the proper rites, may they be deluded. Vishvakarma is the lord of all riches at all sacrifices. May he grant us heaven and earth.

Vishvakarma is the lord of all speech. He is as swift as the speed of thought. We call upon Vishvakarma so that he may offer us protection at the time of this sacrifice. May he accept our oblations and grant us protection. He is the one who is the source of all happiness and the source of all righteous action.

Purusha

(The next *sukta* is the famous *Purusha sukta*. *Purusha* is the embodiment of the universal soul and is thus regarded as the origin of the universe. The *sukta* is composed in the *anushtupa* and *trishtupa* metres and is ascribed to the sage Narayana.)

Purusha is the supreme godhead who has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet. He surrounds the earth from the four directions. One of his forms is merely ten fingers tall. But it pervades creation.

(One interpretation is that, *purusha* or the *paramatman* also has a manifestation in terms of the individual soul or *atman*. It is the *atman* which is ten fingers in length.)

It is the *purusha* who is the past and the future. It is the *purusha* who is the present. The *purusha* flourishes through foodgrains. He is the lord of immortality and of divine bliss.

Immense is the greatness of the *purusha*. But there is a *purusha* who is superior to him as well. All the elements that constitute the universe are merely like one foot of the *purusha*. Three of his footsteps provide immortality in heaven.

Three of the *purusha's* footsteps can be traced in heaven. His form is divided into four quarters. One fourth of his form is born again and again in the universe in the shape of living beings. He created in the four directions being that live on foodgrains and beings that do not.

(Beings that live on foodgrains are the sentient ones. The others are insentient.)

It is from the *purusha* that *virat* was created. Above *virat*, there is the greater *purusha*. *Virat* was divided into various parts. First, the land and the worlds were created. Physical bodies emerged later.

(*Virat* is regarded as the female counterpart of the primeval *purusha*.)

The gods offered oblations to *purusha* and *virat*. They performed a sacrifice. The spring season was the clarified butter that was offered on the occasion of the sacrifice. The summer season was the kindling and the autumn season was the oblation.

Virat was the first to be created and deserved to be worshipped. The gods and the sages saw *virat* and *purusha* and performed a sacrifice in their honour.

From that sacrifice were obtained curds and clarified butter. The birds that fly in the sky were created. The animals that live in the forests where Vayu rules, also emerged. Domesticated animals were created.

From the sacrifice emerged the *mantras* of the *Rig veda*, *Sama hymns*, Various metres and the *mantras* of

the *Atharva Veda* and the *mantras* of the *Yajur Veda* as well.

From that sacrifice were created horses and animals that have two tusks. Cows, goats and sheep emerged.

The *purusha* who has been mentioned was described in all sorts of ways. What was his mouth like? Where were his two arms? Where were his thighs and where were his feet? Such are the questions that are asked.

From the mouth of the *purusha* were born the learned *brahmanas*. From his arms were born the brave *kshatriyas*. From his thighs were born *vaishyas* and from his feet were born the *shudras* (a servant or slave class).

The moon was created from the mind of the *paramatman*. His eyes became the sun. Indra and Agni were born from the mouth and Vayu was created from the breath of life.

The atmosphere was made from the *paramatman's* navel. His head became heaven and his feet the earth. The directions were created from his ears. In this fashion, other worlds can be thought to have been created from other parts of the *paramatman's* anatomy.

Seven were the fencings (the metres) that encircled the place where the sacrifice was held. Twenty-one bundles of kindling were used. The gods performed the sacrifice and the *paramatman* himself was the sacrificial beast.

The gods began to perform the sacrifice with the aid of the *purusha*. This was one of the most righteous acts ever performed. The individuals who performed this righteous act reside in the most sacred of places. It is certainly the case that learned men go to that most happy of places.

Urvashi and Pururava

(In this *sukta*, Urvashi and Pururava are described as the divinities to whom the hymn is addressed. They are also described as the sages to whom the hymn is ascribed. The entire hymn is in the form of a dialogue between Urvashi and Pururava. The *sukta* is composed in the *trishtupa* metre.

In a naturalistic sense, Pururava has been interpreted as the morning sun and Urvashi as the dawn. The *sukta* in question is however based on a more earthy legend. Urvashi was an *apsara* from heaven who was banished to the earth. There she encountered King Pururava and Pururava wished to marry Urvashi. Urvashi agreed, subject to two conditions being met. The first was that Pururava should always take care of two rams that Urvashi possessed. The second condition was that Urvashi should never see Pururava naked. The couple married and lived together for four years. But the *gandharvas* plotted to take Urvashi back to heaven. One night, they stole one of the rams. In an attempt to catch the thief, Pururava rose from his bed, without having the time to put his clothes on. At that moment, there was a flash of lightning and Urvashi caught a glimpse of her husband naked. Since the conditions were

violated, Urvashi vanished and returned to heaven. Pururava met her subsequently and begged her to return to him. Urvashi consented to do this, but only until a son was born to them.)

Pururava - O cruel wife! Stay here for a short while with your loving words. May the two of us remain together for some time and converse. The memory of the conversation that we have together will be a source of happiness in the days to come.

Urvashi—What purpose will these dry words serve? What happiness can be gleaned from them? I will disappear from your presence like the dawn. O Pururava! Return to your home. I am as elusive as the wind.

Pururava—Your separation has caused me much pain. I can no longer lift an arrow from my quiver in pursuit of victory. I am strong. Yet, I find myself unable to rob my enemies of their cattle and riches. I no longer find the power to carry on with my kingly duties. I used to be like a lion whose roars struck terror into enemies on the field of battle. Alas, all that is a thing of the past.

Urvashi—O dawn! This Urvashi wishes to cook food for her father-in-law. I think of my husband often, and I wish to go to his house. Night and day, I think of my happy life with him. O Pururava! I think of the joy we have had together. I never had any feelings of jealousy for my co-wives. O brave warrior! You were my lord.

Pururava - O Urvashi! You came to me with four of your friends. Their names were Sujurni, Shreni, Sumnapi and Hridechakshu. But after you left, they no longer come to visit me, dressed in their gorgeous clothing. I no longer hear the sounds of their voices, like the voices of cows that have just calved.

Urvashi - O Pururava! When you were born, the wives of the gods came to witness the birth. The rivers that flow bowed down in salutation before the baby. The gods gave you the strength to vanquish and kill enemies in battle. When Pururava came before the *apsaras*, they fled before his energy. It was as if deer were fleeing from a hunter. Yet Pururava married this *apsara* and loved her. Urvashi had a fleeting presence like the lightning that flashes through the clouds. My wishes will be fulfilled if I bear your son. Urvashi prays that the boy may have a long life. O Pururava! The son that I bear you will rule over the whole world. I warned you that my conditions would have to be met, but you paid no heed. You broke the conditions. What is the point of sorrowing now?

Pururava - When will you give birth to a son who will address me as father? He will come to me and cry. Who will wipe his tears then? How can a son be born who will lead to his parents being separated? When will your son frolic in the house of your father-in-law?

Urvashi - I will answer your questions. When your son cries, I will pray for his welfare. I will make sure that he has no reason to cry. I will send your son to you when he is born. It is time for you to return home

now. Do not be ignorant. It is impossible for me to be with you now.

Pururava - I was your beloved husband, but I have fallen from that pedestal. How does it matter if I die unprotected in distant lands? How does it matter if I sleep on the ground or die in grief? How does it matter if wolves devour me in the forests?

Urvashi - O Pururava! May you not die. Do not fall from your pedestal. May you come to no harm and may wolves not bring you grief. May you be preserved. The love of women is but fickle. Their hearts are as cruel as those of wolves. I adopted the form of a woman and lived among men. I lived with you for the space of four years. I loved you. Those memories will serve me well once I take leave of you.

Pururava - You are the joy of the atmosphere. I am the generous Pururava, I am the performer of great deeds. I love you. May I be united with you. My heart is suffering at the thought of the impending separation. Do not go away. Please return to me.

Urvashi - O Pururava! You are the son of Ila. The gods are telling you that you are mortal. But you will worship the best of gods. And after your death, you will go to heaven and be happy.

Herbs

(The next *sukta* is a praise to herbs. It is ascribed to a sage named Bhishag, born in the line of the sage Atharvan. The hymn is composed in the *anushtupa* metre.)

Many are the forms that herbs take. They are full of juices. The gods themselves gave birth to herbs in three different periods of time. (The three periods of time are the seasons spring, monsoon and autumn.) I know that the brown herbs are to be found in a hundred and seven different places. (Hundred and seven is probably simply a large number.)

O herbs! You are like our mothers. You are to be found in a hundred different places. You have a thousand saplings. Many are the acts that you are capable of performing. May you cure us of all ailments.

O herbs! May you thrive and may you have flowers. May you look upon patients with favour. The diseases are like enemies, may you invade them like horses attacking foes. You free us from illnesses. You deliver us from disease.

O herbs! You are the possessors of divine qualities. You are like mothers in the way that you take care of us. That is what I feel about you. O physician! I grant you my horses, cows and clothing for the sake of these herbs.

O herbs! It is certain that you grow on trees. You are to be found on the *palasha* tree. You are praised by mankind and you are the ones who nourish cows.

Like kings coming together to do battle, various herbs come together and mingle. The physician is a learned person. He is well-versed in the treatment of diseases and ailments.

I know the names of the herbs Ashvavati, Somavati, Udojasa and Urjayanti. These and other herbs heal the body.

Like cows emerging from cowsheds, all sorts of powerful juices emerge from herbs. O man! These herbs will serve your body and grant you the wealth of good health.

O herbs! Your mother is named Ishkriti (relief). You cure ailments and banish all disease. May you quickly fall down (presumably, from the trees). May he who is a patient, be quickly cured.

Like a thief invading a cowshed, the herbs invade all sorts of disease. Herbs banish all the ailments that cause trouble to the body.

I grasp with my hands herbs that are a source of strength. Like animals fleeing before a hunter, the symptoms of the disease run away.

O herbs! The disease has entered the limbs and the bones of the patient. May the herbs enter his body and purge all disease.

O disease! Fly away like birds. Run quickly away. May you have the speed of the wind.

O herbs! The juice of one herb is mixed with that of a second. The juice of the second herb is mixed with that of a third. May all the herbs of the world be united in listening to my prayers. May I be protected.

There are herbs that have fruit, and there are those that do not. There are herbs that have flowers, and

there are those that do not. All these herbs were created by Brihaspati. May all herbs free us from illness.

May herbs protect me from all curses. May herbs protect me from the weapons of Varuna, Yama and the other gods. May herbs make me free.

The herbs descended from heaven. If the herbs look upon a person with favour, he never suffers from ill health.

Soma is the king of herbs. Soma is blessed with many qualities. O Soma! You are the best of the herbs. May you fulfil my desires and may you bring happiness into my life.

The herbs are to be found on earth and Soma is their chief. Brihaspati created the herbs so that they may cure patients.

O herbs! The one who digs you out of the ground, may he not be destroyed. I dig you out from the ground for the sake of the patient. May the patient not be destroyed. May all bipeds and quadrupeds be free from disease. May our sons and our animals be free from disease.

The herbs which are far away will listen to these prayers. The herbs which are near will also listen to these prayers. All the herbs will combine to make the diseased body healthy again.

The physician uses the herbs for treatment. Soma is the king of the herbs. The other herbs propose to Soma

that the patient may be cured. May the danger of disease be removed.

O herbs! You are the best of all the herbs. You are superior to all other trees. There are those who wish to destroy us. (This means ailments.) May such foes become our slaves.

Sarama and the Panis

(The next *sukta* is in the form of a dialogue between Sarama and the *panis*. Sarama is a messenger of the gods. Later, she became the divine dog. As mentioned earlier, the *panis* were robbers. This *sukta* is composed in the *trishtupa* metre. It is not ascribed to any particular sage. Sarama and the *panis* are named as the sages.)

The *panis* - O Sarama! Why have you come here to visit us? The path that comes here is long and difficult. How did you come here? How did you pass the night? How did you manage to cross the waters of the river?

(The *panis* have stolen some cows and have hidden them in a mountain cavern. This place is surrounded by a river.)

Sarama - O *panis*! I am Indra's messenger. It is he who has sent me to you. You have stolen a lot of cows and it is my desire to retrieve them. The waters of the river could do me no harm as I was protected by the gods. It is true that, at first, I was scared of the crossing. But I managed to cross and come over to the other bank.

The *panis* - O Sarama! What is your master Indra like? How strong is he? What does he look like? How many soldiers does he have? You have come a long way at the behest of your master. We would like Indra to be our friend. We would like him to be our master. We would like Indra to look after our cattle as well.

Sarama - I know that my master can never be destroyed. He is the one who destroys everything. Such is the master at whose behest I have travelled such a long distance. The deep waters of the river could not run counter to the wishes of my master. O *panis*! Listen to what I have to say. It is certain that Indra will slaughter you all.

The *panis* - O Sarama! You are the fortunate one. You may be able to reach the furthest points of the sky. You expressed a desire to obtain the cows. But who is going to let go of the cows without a fight? We have many sharp weapons that we can fight with.

Sarama - O *panis*! Your words are not those that should be used by warriors. You are sinners. And therefore you will not have the strength to use your arrows. You will not be able to tread properly. Brihaspati will never grant you happiness.

The *panis* - O Sarama! We have hidden the treasure in a place that is surrounded by mountains. There are cows, horses and many other riches. We *panis* are well-versed in the art of defence. We will be able to protect our treasure. Our cows and riches are safe. You have wasted a trip.

Sarama - The sages Angirasa and Ayasya will be fortified after drinking the *soma* juice. They will come here straight. They will free all the cows. O *panis*! Then you will have to retract your proud words.

The *panis* - O Sarama! We know that you have been frightened by the gods and forced to come here. We look upon as our own sister. Do not return to Indra. O beautiful one! Stay here. We will give you a share of the cows.

Sarama - O *panis*! I cannot be your sister and you are not my brothers. I do not know these relationships. I only know Indra and the powerful Angirasa. When I return and tell Indra what has happened, he will come and invade you. He will deliver the cows. You will run far away if you know what is good for you. O *panis*! Flee far away. Free the cows and let them go up to heaven. Brihaspati will receive the cows that you have secreted so well. You have tried to keep it a secret. But Soma, Indra and the sages have found out where the cows are hidden.

Prajapati

(The next *sukta* is addressed to Hiranyagarbha or Prajapati the creator. It is composed in the *trishtupa* metre and is ascribed to no particular sage.)

Prior to the act of creation, only Hiranyagarbha was there. Hiranyagarbha is the *paramatman*. He is the one and only one who created the universe. He is the one who bears aloft the earth and the atmosphere. The *paramatman* is the source of all happiness. It is him that we worship through our oblations.

He is the one who provides the knowledge of the *atman*. He is the source of all strength. All the worlds and all the gods follow his instructions. It is his decree that is followed everywhere. In the shadow of his refuge there is the seed of immortality. To forsake the *paramatman* is to get to know death. The *paramatman* is the source of all happiness. It is him that we worship through our oblations.

His greatness makes him the lord of all things, sentient and insentient. He alone is the king of all things, mobile and immobile. He is the master of all bipeds and quadrupeds. The *paramatman* is the source of all happiness. It is him that we worship through our oblations.

The snow-clad mountains have been created by his power. The rivers that flow and the earth that moves have been created by him. It is he who created the oceans and the sky. The four directions owe their origin to his strength. The *paramatman* is the source of all happiness. It is him that we worship through our oblations.

It is he who instilled energy in the sky and the atmosphere. It is through his grace that the earth has been made firm. He created heaven and he established the sun in the atmosphere. It is he who placed water in the sky. The *paramatman* is the source of all happiness. It is him that we worship through our oblations.

Heaven and earth are full of sound. But they are firm so that living beings may be protected. It is his

will that has achieved all this. It is through his powers that the sun rises and shines in the sky. The *paramatman* is the source of all happiness. It is him that we worship through our oblations.

The great fire and the entire universe was created by him. It is he who bore the golden (*hiranya*) egg (*anda*) from which the universe was created. He is Hiranyagarbha. He is the one who made water course in the universe. He is the supreme Prajapati. He is the one who provided water so that gods and other living beings could thrive. The *paramatman* is the source of all happiness. It is him that we worship through our oblations.

He is the creator of sacrifices and of the water that pervades the universe at the time of destruction. It is through his grace that the waters rise up into the sky. He is the lord of all the gods. He alone is supreme. The *paramatman* is the source of all happiness. It is him that we worship through our oblations.

May the creator of the earth preserve us from all harm. He is the origin of righteousness and he is the creator of heaven. He is the source of the waters that bring bliss. The *paramatman* is the source of all happiness. It is him that we worship through our oblations.

O Prajapati! There is no one else but you. You alone are the one who permeates the past, the present and the future. You are the vastness itself. We offer oblations to you so that our desires may be fulfilled. Grant us our wishes. May we be the possessors of riches.

Creation

(Let us next have a *sukta* on creation. It is addressed to Prajapati and is composed in the *trishtupa* metre. The *sukta* is not ascribed to any particular sage.)

After the destruction, there was no truth. Nor was there any untruth. This was prior to the creation and there were no worlds then. The objects that can be seen in the sky were not present. Who was it that covered up everything then? Where were all objects then? Where were the deep and silent waters?

At that time, there was no death. But nor was there immortality. The sun and the moon were not there. Therefore, there was no sense of night or day. Winds did not blow. The *brahman* alone was there. And it was the *brahman* alone who breathed through his powers. Apart from the *brahman*, there was no other object.

This was the scene of destruction and chaos that prevailed before creation began. Everything was shrouded in darkness. There was water all around. All that could be seen around was the power of the *brahman*.

The time of creation came. The idea of creation entered the *paramatman's* mind. From the powers of his mind, he first created the origin of seeds. Through the intelligence of his heart, he next created the elements that constitute the universe.

It was the *purusha* who bore the seeds. The power of greatness was created. The rays that emanated from the *paramatman* spread out in all the directions, above and below.

No man knows and no man can tell how creation began. Men are ignorant of who performed the act of creation. Even the learned ones were born only after creation started. How can one oneself say how one was created?

No one is learned enough to know about the creation. How does one know who bore all that was created? The learned ones only know that the *paramatman*, the creator, resides above. And even that knowledge is probably suspect.

The Forests

(We now have a *sukta* addressed to the goddess of the forests. This is composed in the *anushtupa* metre and is ascribed to the sage Devamuni.)

O goddess of the forests! You can be seen in the forests and in the wilderness. But you vanish before our eyes. Why are you not seen in towns and villages? Why do you go to the deserted forests? Do you not feel sacred there?

There are animals that roar in a loud voice. There are animals that call in a soft voice. When these two types of voices mingle, the sound is that of a musical instrument (*veena*) being played. It is as if the animals are chanting the praise of the goddess of the forest.

Animals like cows also graze in the forest. The trees and creepers that grow in the forest seem to set up a canopy above one's head. When it is evening, carts emerge from the forest. They are laden with saplings

and firewood. It is almost as if the goddess of the forests is sending the carts home.

O goddess of the forest! There a man is calling to his cows. There is another chopping down firewood. Men who spend the night in the forests hear all sorts of sounds and are frightened. So it is said.

The forests do not perform violent acts towards anyone. In fact, no one brings any harm to the forests. The forest is the place where sweet fruits can be found. One can eat those and live happily.

All sorts of fragrances can be found in the forest. There is food in the form of fruits and roots. The forest is a fertile region. It is the mother of the deer. Is it not natural that I should sing the praise of the goddess of the forests?

Shraddha

(*Shraddha* connotes respect, faith and devotion, and in the *sukta* which follows, *shraddha* is itself described as the sage to whom the *sukta* is ascribed. The hymn is composed in the *anushtupa* metre.)

It is through devotion that a fire is kindled in every household. It is through devotion that oblations are offered at a sacrifice. We praise *shraddha*. It is the best of all riches.

O *shraddha*! May the desires of one who gives alms be fulfilled. O *shraddha*! Ensure the welfare of one who is generous. Listen to these words of mine. And grant the desired fruit to those who are performing the sacrifice.

Indra and the other gods decided to destroy the powerful demons. You ensured that their desires were fulfilled. Like that, may the wishes of those who are performing the sacrifice be granted.

Gods and men pray to devotion so that they may be protected from strong winds. They make up their minds that they will worship *shraddha*. May *shraddha* grant them riches.

We pray to devotion in the morning. We pray to devotion in the middle of the day. We pray to devotion in the evening. O *shraddha*! Grant devotion to those of us who live in this world.

Shachi

(Shachi is Indra's wife. In the *sukta* that follows, she exults at her triumph over her co-wives. She is the sage to whom the hymn is ascribed and the hymn is composed in the *anushtupa* metre.)

The sun which is established in heaven has risen. It is Indra himself who adopts the form of Surya. May my good fortune also dawn like the sun. I know my husband and I know that he will be devoted to me. I have the power to triumph over my co-wives. I will be victorious over them.

I am the chief of the wives, like the head is the chief of the body. I am learned and rise above, like a flag. Even when I am angry, I can persuade my husband to utter sweet words to me. I am the one who triumphs over my co-wives. They will listen to me and obey my wishes.

It is my son who will defeat the enemies. It is my daughter who will be adorned. I will triumph over everyone. I am the one who, with my husband, will be famous.

My husband Indra gains his strength from the oblations that are offered. He is supreme in the universe. O gods! It is I who offered those oblations. It is thanks to this that my co-wives have been subdued.

I do not have enemies. I triumph over my enemies. I am the victorious one who triumphs over all. Just as the power and the energy of enemies gets destroyed, the power and energy of my co-wives have been neutralised by me.

I am the one who defeats others. I have defeated my co-wives. I will lord over Indra and his relations. Such is my wish.

A Charm against Nightmares

(We now have a charm against nightmares. This is ascribed to the sage Angirasa, descended from the sage Prachetas. The hymn is composed in a mixture of the metres *anushtupa*, *trishtupa* and *pamkti*.)

O lord of the mind! Do not cause me distraction while I sleep. May you be banished. Go far away. Go and dwell in distant regions. Tell Nirriti, the goddess of sin, to keep her distance. I am still alive and my mind is preoccupied with thoughts of the material world. Let her not bring me grief.

(Nirriti is the goddess of destruction.)

Everyone desires to have the best of rewards. And they do attain what they want. I ask the favour of Yama, the son of Vivasvana. May he not cause me unhappiness. May my mind be able to think of various subjects.

When I am awake, I think of the various misfortunes that may descend on me. When I go to sleep, I try to be free from fear and think of the good things that may happen to me. But the various misfortunes plague me in my sleep. O Agni! Please ensure that such nightmares keep their distance.

O Indra! O Brihaspati! If I have committed sins against you, please forgive me. May those sins not give rise to nightmares. May Angirasa and the learned Varuna preserve me from all manner of sin.

Today is the day when I will be victorious. Today is the day when I will attain my desires. I have been cleansed of all sin. I have been forgiven all the sins that I, asleep or awake, may have committed. I have even been forgiven the sins that I may have thought of committing. May sin plague only those who hate me.

The Destruction of Rivals

(The next *sukta* is a prayer for the destruction of rivals. It is ascribed to the sage Rishabha and is composed in the *anushtupa* and *mahapamkti* metres.)

O Indra! Make me the best among all my peers. May I have special powers so that I can defeat my

enemies. May I defeat my enemies and become radiant. May I become the possessor of cows.

I am the one who destroys enemies. I will be like Indra. No one will be able to hate or hurt me. All my enemies will have to cower down before my feet.

The two ends of a bow are tied down with the string of the bow. O lord of speech! I tie you down like the two ends of a bow. Influence the words that my enemies utter; make them speak humbly to me.

I will be the one who will vanquish everyone. I will be the powerful and strong one. O my enemies! I conquer your minds. I conquer your deeds. I conquer you in battle.

O my enemies! I will rob you of all your good qualities and become superior to you in every respect. I will be acknowledged as your leader and adorn you like a crown. You will be gathered together at my feet and croak like frogs do from a pond.

The King

(Our next *sukta* is a hymn that was recited when a new king was crowned. It is ascribed to the sage Dhruva Angirasa and is composed in the *anushtupa* metre.)

O king! You have been crowned the lord of this kingdom. You are our king. May you always be constant and firm. May all the subjects love you. We pray that you may not bring any harm to the kingdom.

O king! May you be firm and constant in this kingdom. May you never be dislodged from your throne. May you be as firm as a mountain. May you rule on earth the way Indra rules in heaven. May you sustain the kingdom.

Many are the oblations that have been offered to Indra. May Indra be pleased and bless this king. May Soma look upon this king with favour. May Brahmanaspati look upon this king with favour.

Let the sky be firm. Let the earth be firm. Let the mountains also be firm. May the entire universe be firm. This king is the lord of his subjects. May he be firm.

O king! The powerful Varuna will preserve your kingdom. Brihaspati is the generous one. He will preserve your kingdom. Indra and Agni will preserve your kingdom. You have made offerings of cakes. These oblations will please Soma. They will please Indra. Indra will ensure that your subjects pay their taxes.

There are many other hymns in the *Rig Veda Samhita*. We cannot hope to reproduce them all. But the sample that we have given you should have stimulated your interest. The *Rig Veda* is like a vast storehouse. If your interest has been stimulated, why don't you read the original text? And if you cannot read all of it, you should certainly read the tenth *mandala*.

The Yajur Veda

The Yajur Veda Samhita

It is important to understand that there were four classes of priests who were required at any sacrifice (*yajna*). The first class consisted of the officiating priests or acolytes (*hotri*). They invoked the gods by reciting the *mantras*, prepared the sacrificial ground and the altar, and poured out the libations. The hymns of the *Rig Veda* are for this class of priests. The second class of priests consisted of the choristers (*udgatri*). These were the ones who chanted the sacred hymns and the hymns of the *Sama Veda* are for this class of priests. The third class of priests consisted of the reciters (*adhvaryu*). They carried out sacrificial rites while chanting the sacred texts and the hymns of the *Yajur Veda* are for this class of priests. The fourth class of priests consisted of *brahmana* overseers. They

supervised the sacrifice and the hymns of the *Atharva Veda* are for this class of priests.

The *Yajur Veda Samhita* thus consists of formulae and verses to be uttered by the *adhvaryu*. These priests were mainly entrusted with manual work that had to be performed at *yajnas*. The liturgical *Yajur Veda* is partly metrical and most of this part is extracted from the hymns of the *Rig Veda*. The remaining part is in prose. The word *yaj* means to sacrifice and it is from this that the name *Yajur Veda* is derived.

Every *Veda* was taught in different *shakhas* (schools) and the teaching of one school often varied from that of another. According to the legend, Vedavyasa taught the four *Vedas* to four of his disciples. Paila was taught the *Rig Veda*, Vaishampayana the *Yajur Veda*, Jaimini the *Sama Veda* and Sumantu the *Atharva Veda*. Vaishampayana taught the *Yajur Veda* to twenty-seven different pupils, and over time the *Yajur Veda* branched off into two different schools. The first one was the *Taittiriya*, often referred to as the black *Yajur Veda*. And the second one was the *Vajasaneyi*, often referred to as the white *Yajur Veda*.

The *Taittiriya Samhita* is called black as it is impure. It is impure because the *samhita* and *brahmana* portions are mixed. The *Vajasaneyi Samhita* clearly demarcates the *samhita* and *brahmana* parts, the *brahmana* part being known as the *Shatapatha Brahmana*.

We will retell for you the *Vajasaneyi Samhita*. As mentioned earlier, this is partly in metrical form and

partly in prose. The prose passages are known as *yajus*. The entire *samhita* consists of forty books or chapters (*adhyaya*).

The gods of the Vedas

The *Vedas* cannot really be appreciated without some sort of an understanding of the gods of the *Vedas*. The gods of the *Vedas* were different in nature and character from the gods that one encounters in the epics or in the sacred texts known as the *Puranas*.

The three major gods of the *Vedas* were Agni, Indra or Vayu and Surya. Agni ruled over the earth (*prithivi*), Indra or Vayu ruled over the atmosphere (*antariksha*), and Surya ruled over heaven (*dyuloka*). All other gods were regarded as manifestations of these three gods. For example, all gods on earth were identified with Agni, all gods in the atmosphere were identified with Indra or Vayu, and all gods in heaven were identified with Surya. This at least was the version given by Yaska, a commentator on the *Vedas* who lived around 800 B.C. There were two other points of view as well. One held that all the various gods were manifestations of the same unified supreme godhead. This monotheistic point of view can be particularly found in the *Upanishads*. An alternative point of view subscribed to polytheism and held that all the various gods could not be identified; they were distinct.

Even within the *Vedas*, the number of gods varies from place to place. In some places, there are only three gods, one ruling over the earth, the second over the atmosphere and the third over heaven. The earth,

the atmosphere and heaven were known as *lokas* (regions), there being three *lokas*. In some places, the *Vedas* state that there were 11 gods for each *loka*, so that there were 33 gods in all. In some cases, there are references to 3339 gods. When it came to the age of the *Puranas*, the number of gods increased to thirty-three crores.

Many scholars have suggested that the gods of the *Vedas* are nature gods. That is, forces of nature came to be ascribed with divine qualities and became gods. To some extent, this is indeed true. But the forces of nature have been so humanised that their original elemental form is sometimes impossible to detect. This is known as anthropomorphism. Besides, there are also abstract deities with whom no forces of nature can readily be identified.

It is also important to realise that the gods of the *Vedas* cannot easily be compartmentalised into pantheons of monotheism or polytheism. What is more commonly found is kathenotheism. That is, there is more than one god, but whenever a hymn is addressed to a particular god, that god comes to be ascribed with all the divine qualities. In course of the hymn, the god in question is regarded as the supreme godhead, and all the other gods come to be regarded as his manifestations.

The gods of the *Vedas* can now be catalogued under three different headings - gods of heaven (*dyuloka*), gods of the atmosphere (*antariksha*), and gods of the earth (*prithivi*).

The chief gods of heaven are Dyouspita, Mitra/Varuna, Surya/Savita/Pusha, Vishnu, the two Ashvinis, Usha and Chandrma. Dyouspita is regarded as the father of the universe, *prithivi* being regarded as the mother. Dyouspita and the earth are together addressed as Dyavaprihivi. Dyouspita seems to have been a personification of the sky. The gods Mitra and Varuna are almost invariably addressed in unison. Mitra seems to have been identified with the day and Varuna with the night. Mitra is also identified with Surya. In the period of the epics and the *Puranas*, Varuna came to be regarded as the lord of the ocean. But this was not the case at the time of the *Vedas*. Surya is the sun-god and Savita is a manifestation of Surya at specific points of time. Pusha is also a manifestation of Surya. Vishnu is a minor god in the *Vedas* and there are indications that Vishnu was also regarded as a manifestation of Surya. The two Ashvinis are physicians of the gods, sharing a common wife named Usha (the dawn). In the *Vedas*, the Ashvinis are closely associated with Surya. They may very well have been stars (*nakshatra*) identified with the morning and the evening. Another name for the two Ashvinis is Nasatya. Usha is the goddess of the dawn. She is also addressed as Dakshina (sacrificial fee). It was at the time of dawn that priests began sacrifices and received their fees. Chandrama is the moon-god, but is a minor god. He is closely identified with the god Soma.

The chief gods of the atmosphere are Indra, Aja Ekapada, Matarishvan/Vayu/Vata, Parjanya, Rudra and the Maruts. Indra is the most powerful of all the

gods. He killed the demon Vritra and is accordingly addressed as Vritraha. Purandara is another of his names. Aja Ekapada is a minor god and is probably a manifestation of either Agni or Surya. Matarishvan, Vayu and Vata are all gods of the wind. Parjanya has a close relationship with them and is a personification of clouds. Parjanya thus rules over herbs and rains. The Rudra of the *Vedas* is not the Rudra of the *Puranas*. In the *Vedas*, Rudra is a god associated with the wind. Alternatively, he is identified with Agni. The Maruts are also wind-gods and are regarded as the offspring of Rudra. The number of the Maruts is not unambiguously given. In some places, the number seems to be 180. In other places, there seem to be 21 Maruts. The Maruts are close companions of Indra.

The chief gods of the earth are Agni, Brihaspati/ Brahmanaspati, Soma and Sarasvati. Agni is the main god of the earth, he is the fire-god. There are three different types of fire - *ahavaniya*, *dakshinagni* and *garhapatya*. *Ahavaniya agni* is used to offer oblations to the gods, *dakshinagni* is used to make offerings to the ancestors and *garhapatya agni* is the fire that continually burns in any household. In the age of the *Vedas*, fire was ignited by rubbing two pieces of stick (*arani*) together. These are known as *uttararani* and *adhararani*. It is not entirely clear whether Brihaspati or Brahmanaspati is indeed a god. He seems to have been more like a chief priest, often regarded as the lord of all hymns. It was only in a later period that Brihaspati came to be identified with a *nakshatra*. Soma is really a herb, although he is also identified with Chandrama. In the *Vedas*, Sarasvati is

not the goddess of learning. She is a river, also known as Bharati.

Let us now see what the *Yajur Veda Samhita* has to say.

Adhyaya one

The god Savita is the creator of all beings. May Savita grant you foodgrains. May he grant you strength. O men! You are the breath of life. May the great creator guide you on the path to superior action. O men! Forge ahead. May you not kill other living beings. May you set aside a share for Indra at sacrifices. May you have children and may you be free of ill health and tuberculosis. Thieves will not steal your goods and sinners will not harm you. O Savita! Reside with the king who is performing this sacrifice. Bless him with many subjects and preserve the sacrificial beasts.

(Although the hymn is addressed to Savita, in this context, Savita probably does not mean a manifestation of Surya. The word is probably used to signify the supreme godhead (*paramatman*).)

You are the one who makes the *vasus* pure, you are heaven and earth, you are the one who makes the warmth of life flow in all living beings. You are the one who nurtures everything. May your greatness increase in the best of places. You will not be evil, nor will one who performs a sacrifice to you be evil.

(This hymn is again addressed to the *paramatman*. The *vasus* are gods and there are eight of them. The

eight *vasus* are sometimes identified as Agni, Prithivi, Vayu, Antariksha, Aditya, Dyou, Chandrama and Nakshatra. The word *aditya* signifies a son of Aditi, the mother of all the gods.)

In your countless flows you make the *vasus* pure. Your thousand flows unite with the *vasus* to make them pure. O men! The one who purifies everything and the one who creates everything will also purify you. O men! Where is the *kamadhenu* whose milk you have drunk?

(A *kamadhenu* is a cow which gives whatever fruits one desires. The answer to the question of where is the *kamadhenu*, is given in the subsequent hymn.)

O men! You possess three *kamadhenus*. The first is a full life span, the second is the power to perform all actions, and the third is the energy that is the nurturer of everything. O men! You are all parts of Indra and to you too, I offer the *soma* juice. O Vishnu! Please protect the oblations of the sacrifice.

(The first part of this hymn may seem obscure, but the implication is the following. Some men strive for a long live, others attain fame through their actions and still others seek union with the energy that is the *paramatman*. The word Vishnu is probably used not with the specific god Vishnu in mind, but as a general expression for all gods.)

O Agni! You are the one who enables religious rites (*vrata*) to be performed. I will try to observe *vratas* and may I be successful in this endeavour. May my *vrata*

be performed and may I spurn that which is untrue and seek that which is true.

O men! Who is the one who spurs you to action? Why does he desire that this action be performed? He inspires the two of you to action so that both of you may obtain houses.

(This again is slightly obscure. Who are the two who are being addressed ? The word two refers to two types of men, the wise as opposed to the ignorant and the weak as opposed to the strong. The house seems to be a reference to heaven. Those who perform good acts attain this house quickly.)

Rakshasas (demons) have been vanquished; they have been burnt to ashes. Those who are narrow-minded have also been burnt up. Now the wide open spaces are free and I can roam at will.

O men! You have the power to destroy. Destroy assassins and killers, destroy those who bring us harm. Destroy those whom all of us wish to vanquish. You are the ones who can summon the gods with excellent oblations. You are the ones who can offer them means of transport. You are the ones who can purify the gods and make them complete.

(This hymn is to be interpreted in the sense that the gods reside in human bodies. For example, *Surya* is in the eyes, *Chandrama* in the mind, *Vayu* in the nose, *Prithivi* in the legs, and *Antariksha* in the navel.)

Oblations are offered in vessels. O men! May you be as straight as these vessels and may you be strong.

May you be truthful and may the one who is performing the sacrifice for you also be truthful. May Vishnu descend on you and may you roam in the places frequented by Vayu. Rakshasas will keep their distance from you. The five will act as captors.

(The five is a reference to the five senses of action, knowledge, the mind, intelligence and the soul. The five senses will be controlled and will capture the divine energy.)

The god who is the root of all creation will preserve you (men). The arms of the Ashvinis will preserve you and the hands of the god Pusha will preserve you. I will offer the oblations that are loved by Agni, I will also offer the oblations that are loved by Soma.

Men have been created so that they may tread along superior paths. They have not been created so as to be narrow-minded. I can see the shining *atman* (soul). May the dwellings on earth be well-preserved, may I travel through the atmosphere at will. Men have been established at the centre of the earth. O Agni! Preserve these oblations.

The two of you are blessed with the power of the great Vishnu and with the power to purify. This universe has been made by the great creator. I will use the rays of the sun to purify everything. O divine drops of water! You are the first one to make every object sacred. Come to this sacrifice. Bless the performer of the sacrifice with the best of metals. Make the performer of the sacrifice devoted to the gods so that he can forge forward.

(The first part of this hymn is again not very clear. Obviously, men in general are being addressed. Vishnu probably means the *paramatman* and the word two is used to signify Vishnu's power and the power to purify.)

O water! Indra acknowledged your superiority at the time of killing the demon Vritra. You also acknowledged Indra's superiority at that time. You have been purified. I purify you, the beloved of Agni. I purify you, the beloved of Soma. May you become sacred so that divine tasks can be performed. May you become sacred so that sacrifices to the gods can be performed. Men who are not pure get defeated. It is for these reasons that I am purifying you.

May demons keep their distance and may narrow-minded people be banished. O men! Happiness is to be found in you. May you be free. You are like mountains covered with trees. You are like boulders. May you prosper.

O men! You are the body of Agni. You have the power to create words. I accept that in you can be found the energy of the gods. You are like mountains covered with trees. Prepare oblations so that all the gods may be satisfied. Purify the oblations and offer them in peace. You are the ones who offer oblations of food. Come here.

O men! You can conjure up sweet words. Create compositions in praise of strength and foodgrains. Your power will lead to the destruction of enemies. May your wisdom and knowledge increase every year.

Demons will maintain their distance or be destroyed. Those who are narrow-minded will be banished. Vayu will purify you. The god Savita whose hands are covered with gold will bless you.

O men! May you have patience. O Agni! Let not those who eat meat come near us. But reside with those who worship the gods. May Agni be constant and may he make the earth prosper. Agni is the one who makes *brahmanas* (the priestly class), *kshatriyas* (the warrior class) and our kin thrive. I crave that Agni may be near me so that the evil can be killed.

O Agni! Make wisdom pervasive. You are the nurturer, nurture the atmosphere. You are the one who makes *brahmanas*, *kshatriyas* and our kin thrive. Make heaven prosper. I keep you close to me in all the four directions. You are the harbinger of our welfare and you are the one who sharpens our senses. Make us tread along superior paths. May the energy of the sages Bhrigu and Angirasa increase your energy even more.

O Agni! You are the source of all happiness. May demons and those who are narrow-minded maintain their distance. May prosperity be close to you. You are the wisdom that resides in mountains. May you be familiar with this knowledge. May you make heaven thrive.

(The concept of there being wisdom in mountains may not be very clear. In *yoga* (a technique of meditation), there is an identification of the human spine with a mountain range and it is thought that

there is latent knowledge in the spine which needs to be progressively elevated through the meditation.)

Foodgrains find their expression in men. It is men who please and satisfy the gods. It is men who bear the breath of life. As a man, the divine energy courses through my body so that I may have a long life. The god Savita whose arms are adorned with gold will bless us men. The eyes and the senses of men are the source of great energy.

O men! You flourish in the creation created by the supreme godhead. You flourish in the creation that is blessed by the arms of the Ashvinis. You flourish in the creation that is blessed by the arms of Pusha. May the water be mingled with the herbs and may the herbs thrive. Let the rich and the swift live in harmony. May this universe be sweetened.

I praise men because they are the source of offsprings. The gods Agni and Soma have their presence in human bodies. Men have warmth in their bodies. They are great and may they have long lives. May their greatness increase even more. May those who perform sacrifices attain fame. Agni will not harm the skin of humans. The god Savita will take men to the highest of heavens.

O men! Do not be afraid. Do not retreat. Perform sacrifices. Let those who perform sacrifices prosper. May the three, the two, and the one make you complete.

(The three, the two, and the one requires explanation. The three basic qualities (*guna*) and

those of truth (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*) and darkness (*tamas*). *Sattva* is identified with three, *rajas* with two, and *tamas* with one. The idea is that an admixture of these three qualities should make men complete.)

I praise men who flourish in the universe created by the supreme godhead. The greatness of men is increased through the blessings of the Ashvinis and Pusha. May men perform non-violent deeds. Men are like Indra's right arm. Men are full of boundless energy, they can kill thousands of enemies. Men destroy those who have hatred in their hearts. Men are the breath of life.

O Prithivi! The gods are worshipping you. May the herbs which grow on you never bring me unhappiness. Make the cowsheds of cowherds prosper. May heaven bring you rains. O supreme creator! On this earth there are those who have hatred in their hearts, and those whom we hate. Bind them up in the nets and let them not escape.

I banish the evil from those places on earth where the gods are worshipped. O supreme creator! Bind the hated ones up in nets. O evil ones! You will not be able to bring grief to heaven.

O Prithivi! I chant hymns to you composed in the *gayatri* metre. I chant hymns to you composed in the *trishtupa* metre. I chant hymns to you composed in the *jagati* metre. O mother earth! You grant us strength and bring us welfare. You bring us happiness and grant us the best of places to sit in. The earth is blessed with food and water.

O learned ones! Brave is he who gives up his life in a battle between two powerful foes. But braver is he who gives up his life for the sake of his motherland. Though his powers, such a person delivers up his motherland to Chandrama. May those who thus purify be near us. May they kill the ones who hate.

(Chandrama is not literally meant to signify the moon. Etymologically, the word *chandrama* means one who brings happiness. The sense therefore is that someone who sacrifices himself for his motherland brings happiness to his country.)

The demons have been vanquished and burnt to ashes. The narrow-minded ones have been vanquished and burnt to ashes. The vast and open spaces are now free. Men are strong like sharp weapons. Men are the swords which destroy enemies. I purify the power that is in men.

O men! You are like the clothing of independence. You are the dwelling-house of the supreme creator. I praise you for the sake of foodgrains and strength. I look upon you with my eyes. You are like the tongue of Agni. You will welcome the gods to the sacrifices held in every household.

This universe has been created by the supreme godhead. I purify all men with the rays of the sun. Men are energy and valour. Men are immortal like the place where a sacrifice is held. Men are beloved of the gods.

This concludes *Adhyaya* one. We will now skip a few chapters and move on to *Adhyaya* five.

Adhyaya five

O Soma! You are the body of Agni. I worship you because you are the beloved of the *paramatman*. I pray to Soma because Soma is the beloved of Vishnu. O Soma! You are the one who pleases and satisfies guests. You yourself are like Vishnu, the lord of all riches.

Soma is the source of Agni. Soma is the source of all strength. O Soma! You are life. You are Urvashi and Pururava. I churn you to the chanting of hymns composed in the *gayatri*, *trishtupa* and *jagati* metres.

(Pururava was the grandson of Chandrama and Urvashi was an *apsara* (dancer) from heaven. The *Vedas* and *Puranas* have references to the love affair between the King Pururava and the celestial nymph Urvashi. Scholars have interpreted this union in a naturalistic sense. That is, Pururava has been identified with the Sun and Urvashi with the dawn. Urvashi also means someone who controls every object and this is probably the sense in which the word should be interpreted in the context of the hymn. Similarly, Pururava means someone who can converse well. That is, the drinking of the *soma* juice confers the power to converse well.)

O Agni! May you be concentrated and constant, may you not flicker. Do not destroy the sacrifice and make sure that the performer of the sacrifice prospers. On this day, we desire that you will bring us welfare.

O Agni! Preserve those who are performing the sacrifice. May Agni merge into the *ahavaniya* fire. You

are the son of the sages. O Agni! Bring us the happiness and carry our oblations to the gods. I offer these oblations to you.

(You will remember of course that *ahavaniya agni* is the fire into which oblations are offered. Why should Agni be referred to as the son of the sages? The word that is used for son is *putra*. Etymologically, the word *putra* signifies a person who delivers one from the hell (*naraka*) named *put*. The sense therefore is that Agni delivers the sages from hell.)

I worship the Agni who is the lord of everything. I worship the Agni who is as beloved to me as a grandson. I worship the Agni who is strong and powerful and always mobile. Agni has so far never been maligned by anybody, nor will Agni ever be maligned. Agni increases the strength of the gods; he deserves all praise. May Agni protect us from performing tasks that bring disrepute. Let Agni rise up straight and attain the best of places. We are performing the sacrifice in accordance with the prescribed rites. May Agni make our sacrifice a success.

O Agni! You are the one who permits religious rites (*vrata*) to be performed. May your body merge with mine. May we always be close together. May my initiation into the world of learning (*diksha*) be a success. May I attain powers.

O Soma of the divine powers! May you be offered to Indra and may you increase Indra's wisdom. Bring riches and wisdom to all my friends. O shining Soma!

May you prosper. Grant me the boon that I may be able to successfully complete my sacrifice. Grant me riches and show me the path that leads to the truth. I worship all those who are fit to be worshipped in heaven and on earth.

O Agni! Your energy can be found in iron. You are the one who grants the gods the objects of their desire. You are the one who makes the demons live in terrible places and you are the one who robs them of their harsh words. I dedicate this sacrifice to your body. O Agni! Your energy can be found in silver. O Agni! Your energy can be found in gold. I dedicate this body to your sacrifice.

O Agni! You bring us warmth and riches. Preserve me in the course of this sacrifice. I acknowledge you to be the fire that is there in the sky. I acknowledge you to be the fire that is in my body. I acknowledge you to be the fire that grants us long lives. You are present on earth at all sacrifices. You are never maligned. O Agni! Since you are in the sky, I hail you by the name of Nabha. (*Nabha* means the sky.) Since you are in my body, I hail you by the name of Angirasa. (*Anga* means part of the anatomy). From the atmosphere you descend to the place of the sacrifice. I establish you on the occasion of the sacrifice. O earth! I also acknowledge your supremacy so that I may please the gods.

O earth! May you be like a lioness and may you defeat the enemies. May you ensure the welfare of the gods. May you be pure.

Indra and the eight Vasus will protect the earth towards the east. Varuna and the eleven Rudras will protect the earth towards the west. The ancestors (*pitris*) will protect the earth towards the south. Vishvakarma and the twelve Adityas will protect the earth towards the north. I offer this sanctified water with this wish.

(The Vasus are gods and there are believed to be eight such gods. Rudra is sometimes referred to as a single god, and at other times, there are said to be eleven different Rudras. Vishvakarma is regarded as the architect of the gods, but in the *Vedas*, he is often referred to as the creator of the universe. That is, he is identified with the supreme godhead. The word Aditya signifies a son of Aditi, the mother of the gods. Gods are thus generally referred to as Adityas. Specifically, there were twelve Adityas, each such Aditya being a manifestation of Surya. For each of the twelve months, there was one Aditya.)

O earth! You destroy the demons through your valour. You are like a lioness. I offer these oblations to you; please accept them. You are the fount of all wisdom; I offer these oblations to you. You are the one who grants good subjects, riches and prosperity. Accept these offerings and bring the gods to this sacrifice. Bless all beings who are born.

May the earth be still. May the atmosphere be still. May the heaven be still. Let not anything in the universe move. That is my wish.

Those who are learned attain wisdom by observing others who are learned. They concentrate their minds

and seek the path of *yoga*. They control their intelligence and perform righteous deeds. The learned sing the praise of the *paramatman* and may this praise be glorified. May oblations be offered for the pleasure of the *paramatman*.

Vishnu bore this universe. He placed one step on earth, a second step in the atmosphere and a third step in heaven. Vishnu is omnipresent; he encompasses the universe. Oblations are offered to the great godhead.

(The word Vishnu is here used synonymously with the *paramatman*. There is an associated legend in the *Puranas* whereby Vishnu traversed the universe in three of his footsteps. This took place on the occasion of the sacrifice organised by the demon-king Vali and relates to the story of Vishnu's dwarf (*vamana*) incarnation.)

O Dyavaprithivi! You bring about the welfare of men by providing them with foodgrains and cows. O omnipresent *paramatman*! You have divided Dyavaprithivi into the sky and the earth. You protect the earth through your rays. I offer these oblations to you.

O men! Announce this message in all assemblies of learned people. Make it be known that it is non-violent deeds that should be performed. Advance towards the east, the direction where the sun rises. Observe sacrifices and perform righteous deeds. Do not retreat and do not perform acts of ill repute. Do not perform destructive deeds. Establish your

cowsheds in the best of places. Do not do that which impairs one's long life. Make sure that the subjects prosper. And dwell in those places on earth that bring one happiness.

I do not have words to describe the glory of the *paramatman*. It is he who created the earth, the atmosphere and heaven. His power manifests itself in these three worlds. May his fame spread and may he dwell in the best of places.

O Vishnu! (Vishnu again means the *paramatman*.) Take pity on us. Bring us objects from heaven so that we may be fulfilled. May objects from the atmosphere bring us happiness. May we be fulfilled through objects received from the earth. O supreme godhead! Bring us happiness from the right and from the left. It is to you that we pray through this sacrifice.

The *paramatman* is like a terrible lion that dwells in the mountain. Such is his valour. His acts deserve praise. It is through the *paramatman's* grace that living beings get to dwell in the three worlds.

The glory of the *paramatman* is pervasive. It is Vishnu who makes this universe constant and controls its expanse. Sentient or not, all objects in the universe were created by the *paramatman*. It is for that great creator that we perform this sacrifice.

It is to please the great Savita that I make offerings. I make offerings to the Ashvinis and to Pusha with my two arms. May Savita come to my aid. May I be able to chop off the heads of the demons with my acts. O

men! You are capable of speech. Chant hymns in praise of Indra.

(In this hymn, Savita is being used as a synonym for the *paramatman*. Pusha is a manifestation of Surya).

O learned men! I vanquish demons through my valour and spread the glory of the *paramatman*. May you also do the same. May your servants also do the same. May you also attain the wisdom that I have attained.

O men! You have been created so that you may perform righteous deeds and defeat your enemies. You have been created so that you may perform sacrifices and kill the insolent. Destroy evil demons and preserve those who are righteous and learned.

O men! You destroy the evil ones and you worship the omnipresent *paramatman*. It is for this reason that you are sacred. May I vanquish the soldiers of my enemies and may I protect the devotees of the *paramatman*. May my wisdom increase and may I learn the knowledge that teaches of the glory of Vishnu. May all of us become devotees of the great *paramatman*.

O Savita! For your pleasure I acknowledge the supremacy of the Ashvinis and of Pusha. May you make me great. May I perform righteous deeds and behead the demons. You are ever youthful. Please ensure that enemy cohorts maintain their distance. I sanctify you for the welfare of heaven. I sanctify you for the welfare of the atmosphere. I sanctify you for

the welfare of the earth. I sanctify you for the welfare of the place where the ancestors dwell.

O men! Make heaven lofty. (Heaven is already lofty. The sense is that, be as high as heaven by performing good deeds). Make the atmosphere vast. (Be as vast as the atmosphere through your deeds.) Make the earth firm. (Be as firm as the earth in your actions). May the god Vayu bring you righteousness. May Mitra and Varuna protect you. Be blessed with wisdom, strength and riches. May you have long lives and may your children prosper.

O wives of those who are performing sacrifices! Bring your children and your cows to the place of the sacrifice. Make the sacrifice a success with your husbands. Offer clarified butter at the sacrifice and fulfil the sky and the earth. O women who perform sacrifices! You are like Indra's shadow; you shelter the world and bring it happiness.

O Indra! You are the one who deserves praise. I sing your glory through my hymns. The aged are praised for their learning. Such is your wisdom that you are the oldest of them all. All praise to you.

Men will be like ropes that bind Indra; they will attain his proximity. Men will obtain Indra's friendship. In men will be found Indra's strength; in them will be found the strength of all the gods.

Agni is everywhere. It is Agni's flames that enable us to perform wonderful deeds. Agni is our friend. He is the bearer (*vahana*) of our oblations (*havya*) and he is thus known as Havyavahana. Agni is the source of

all wisdom. In him is found the knowledge (*veda*) of the universe (*vishva*) and he is thus known as Vishvaveda.

O Agni! You are handsome and learned. You deliver us from sin. You protect us from our enemies. You are sacred and you purify everyone. Blaze forth. You purify the priest who has become thin in body as a result of performing this arduous sacrifice. You bring us welfare and you kill the abductors. O Agni! You are sacred because you carry our oblations to their destinations. You are radiant. You are powerful. You are truth it self.

O *paramatman*! You are as vast as the ocean. You are omnipresent and you have no origin. The universe is gathered near your feet. You do not wither away. You are the first and the foremost. You are the speech; you are the source of divine wealth. You are like the door which opens a sacrifice. May you protect us from all misery. You rule over the righteous path; guide us along it. May we perform good deeds and may our welfare be ensured.

O powerful Agni! We pray to you so that you may look upon us as a friend. You are the one who deserves praise. Protect us through your flaming tongue. May Agni preserve us. We bow down in obeisance before him. Do not lead to our destruction.

O Soma! In you can be found the forms of all the gods. You are like a lamp which lights up their presence. You punish those who bear hatred towards us in their hearts. You destroy the evil demons. We

offer these oblations to you. Be powerful and accept these offerings. May the pleasant Soma accept the clarified butter that we have offered.

O *paramatman*! You light up the entire universe. In you can be found all the divine qualities. You are the source of all wisdom. You are the one who knows the secret of the righteous path. Guide us along that path and make our sacrifice a success. May we attain the fruits that we desire. May we obtain riches. Remove all impediments and sin from the path of the sacrifice. We chant these words in your praise.

Agni will grant us riches. Agni will lead us when we scatter our enemies in battle. Agni will bring us triumph over our foes. Agni will grant us foodgrains. Agni will accept our offerings.

O *paramatman*! You are the supreme godhead. Remove our enemies and remove all our vices. Make us prosper and make us great. We offer these offerings of clarified butter in your name; accept our offerings and thrive. May they prosper who make offerings to you.

O Savita! This *soma* juice is being offered to you, preserve it. May no one bring harm to this *soma* juice. O Soma! You are blessed with divine qualities; bring the gods here to our sacrifice. I summon the gods here for the prosperity and well-being of all mankind. We make these offerings to the gods. May Varuna look upon us with favour.

O Agni! You are the one who ensures that religious rites are properly performed. You will ensure the

success of our rites. Your presence can be found in our bodies, which are part of your being. The *paramatman* will look upon our religious acts with favour.

O Vishnu! You are the *paramatman*, you are like the *ahavaniya* fire. Display your valour when you fight with our enemies and with our vices. Make us great so that we may get to reside in heaven. Accept the offerings of clarified butter that we have made. Make the one who is performing a sacrifice prosper. These offerings are for you.

O god who created the trees! (This seems to be addressed to the *paramatman*). You shun evil people and are close to those who are learned. May I also keep company with learned people. May I attain your proximity. The learned wish to be close to you. That is my wish as well. The learned desire your presence at sacrifices made for the gods. That is my desire as well. Preserve the herbs and protect us. May disease not bring us harm. Please ensure that our sacrifice is a success. May we be wise.

O god who created the trees! Preserve all objects in heaven and preserve all objects in the atmosphere. Be like a friend to the earth. This axe is indeed sharp. We will use it to chop wood for the sacrifice. Stay at the place of the sacrifice for a hundred years. Bring a thousand riches to us.

This concludes *Adhyaya* five. We will again skip a few chapters and move on to *Adhyaya* ten.

Adhyaya ten

The gods have accepted the water that is sweet and strong. This water stirs the senses and grants the power to rule. It is this water that is used for the coronation of the gods Mitra and Varuna. It is this water that is used for the coronation of Indra, the destroyer of enemies. May the gods accept this offering of water.

O water! You increase our strength and wisdom. You grant us kingdoms. Please grant us kingdoms that are ruled through truth. You bring us happiness. Grant us kingdoms and grant kingdoms also to others who desire such a boon. O water! Countless soldiers accompany you. Grant us kingdoms to the sound of sweet words.

O water! You are the one who tries to bring us riches. You are also the one who gives us kingdoms. Grant me kingdoms according to the proper rites. Grant kingdoms to brave warriors who deserve such gifts. I am powerful and valiant, therefore grant me kingdoms. Grant kingdoms to those who possess many soldiers. Those who can rule over the water are those who deserve to be kings.

O kings! Our radiance is like that of the sun. It is we who deserve to be kings and obtain kingdoms. I will bring happiness to the kingdoms I get, I will rule over them through the ways of truth. All the subjects will thrive in bliss. Kingdoms will go to those who worship the *paramatman*. Kingdoms will go to those who preserve cows and other animals. I deserve kingdoms

as I will follow the path of truth. I deserve kingdoms as I am strong and powerful.

May I be like the one who brings prosperity to the universe, may I be as radiant as that great one. I offer these oblations to Agni, to Soma, to Savita, to Sarasvati, to Pusha, to Brihaspati, to Indra, to the gods who rule over the power of sound, to the gods who create ripples in the water, to the gods who created good deeds (punya), and sin (papa), and to the omnipresent Aryama. I offer these oblations for the sake of riches.

O subjects! May you be righteous and pure. May you be devoted to the supreme godhead and may you please him through your good deeds. May you be free from all sin and populate this great universe. May you make righteousness spread throughout this world. May you be as pure as the water that rises up when it is heated by the rays of the sun. O subjects! Do not deviate from the righteous path. Please one another and be like friends through your sweet words. Study the sacred knowledge and perform meditation. It is through your deeds that kingdoms prosper.

Water is the source of all happiness. It is powerful and makes us perform good deeds. It is not impaired by the acts of our enemies. The subjects build houses and the king rules over his subjects with as much purity as can be found in the energy of Agni when it is manifested in the water.

O kings! You are the receptacles of valour. You are the source of valour. You are the fulcrum of brave deeds. You are like the strength of Indra himself. Mitra

and Varuna possess wonderful weapons. These weapons will stay with you and enable you to vanquish your foes. They will help you to break down the fortresses of your enemies. You are like arrows that bring misery to your foes. You are the ones who rule in truth. O brave warriors! Be in the forefront of battle and protect the king. Protect him from the front, protect him from the back, and protect him from the sides. Protect him in all the four directions.

Let all men protect the one who observes sacrifices. Let the Agni who presides over the household protect him, let Indra, the performer of wonderous deeds, know him well. Let Mitra and Varuna, the protectors of proper rites, be close to him. Let him be known by the omniscient Pusha and let him be protected by heaven and earth. The mother of the gods is the source of great happiness. Let her protect him as well.

The snakes have evil natures; may they be destroyed. O men! Move towards the east. The *gayatri mantra*, the *sama* hymns and the spring season will protect you and bring you joy in the form of riches.

O men! Move towards the south. The *trishtupa* metre, the *sama* hymns and the summer season will protect you and bring you joy in the form of riches.

O men! Move towards the west. The *jagati* metre, the *sama* hymns and the monsoon season will protect you and bring you joy in the form of riches.

O men! Move towards the north. The *anushtupa* metre, the *sama* hymns and the autumn season will protect you and bring you joy in the form of riches.

O men! Advance upwards. The *pamkti* metre, the *sama* hymns and the winter season will protect you and bring you joy in the form of riches. May those who do not forsake sinful ways, be beheaded.

May I be prosperous, strong and valiant. May I be freed from the cycle of birth and death. May I be radiant. May I be protected from death.

O Mitra! O Varuna! The two of you are as radiant as gold and as prosperous as kings. You are the ones who rise to make Usha manifest and to spread the glory of Surya and Chandrama. O Mitra! O Varuna! Ascend your chariots and come. Make large kingdoms and small ones flourish through your advice. O Mitra! You are the benefactor. O Varuna! You are capable of repulsing all enemies.

O king! I crown you so that you may shine like Chandrama. I crown you so that you may be as radiant as Agni. I crown you so that you may be as strong as Indra. May you rule over all *kshatriyas* (the warrior class). O king! May you triumph over all impediments that come in the way of your subjects and may you rule over them well.

O gods! Bring power and valour to this deserving king. Bring him great kingdoms so that he may rule like Indra. Let him be crowned so that he may vanquish all his enemies. Let the son of such and such parents be crowned so that he may rule over his subjects. O such and such subjects! This is your king, and also the king of us *brahmanas* (the priestly class).

(Obviously the clause such and such would be replaced by the appropriate name as the occasion warranted.)

The water that is in mountain streams flows down the backs of the mountains. Like that, the water used for the coronation flows down the king's back. From above and from below, this king is sprinkled with water so that he may never be killed. O earth! You will be the place where the fame of this king will spread. O atmosphere! His valour will spread to you. O heaven! You will also learn of the glory of this king.

O Rudra! You rule over subjects. You are alone the lord of all objects; they have no other lord. Grant us the fruits for the sake of which we are making these oblations to you. The one who is performing the sacrifice is the son of such and such and the father of such and such. But we acknowledge you to be our father. With your aid we will perform righteous deeds and attain wealth. O Rudra! You are the one who can destroy everyone. You are the one who deserves to be worshipped in every household. I make these offerings to you; may you accept them.

O men! May you be like Indra's *vajra*. May you be blessed by the gods Mitra and Varuna. May you not suffer violence at the hands of your enemies. May you triumph over your foes through your valour.

O Indra! You wield the *vajra* in you hand. You swiftly defeat all your enemies. You are prosperous and you are the receptacle of all divine qualities. You drive in a chariot to which excellent and well-trained

horses are harnessed. May we never be separated from you and may we never become atheists.

I offer these oblations to Agni who is present in every household. I offer these oblations to Soma, whose presence can be detected in all the trees. I offer these oblations to the valorous Maruts. I offer these oblations to the brave Indra. O motherland! May you preserve me from all destruction and may I never bring you grief.

You are the performer of all righteous deeds. You are the protector of all the subjects. You dwell in the atmosphere, but are the lord of all beings. You are worshipped by those who make oblations into the fire. You make your seat on the earth and are welcomed like a guest in every household. You are present in every kingdom; you are present in the bodies of our leaders. You are based in truth and you are the protector. You are the origin of water and you are the source of true wisdom. In you can be found the strength that does not wane. You grant strength to men and you are the greatest of the great.

(It is not entirely clear to whom this and some of the succeeding hymns are addressed. They are probably addressed to Agni).

You are indeed great; you are like life itself. Grant me a long life. You are energy itself; grant me energy. You are the performer of all righteous deeds. You are like strength itself; grant me strength. O Mitra and Varuna! You are like the two arms of the great Indra. May you be close to Indra.

You bring happiness. You provide the strength that preserves kingdoms. Be seated on this throne and rule over this kingdom.

The best of kings makes his subjects prosper. He performs good deeds and makes the kingdom thrive. He rules in all fairness.

O god! You are capable of defeating all your enemies. May the five directions bring you bliss. You are strong and learned. You are the god who created righteousness. You are the valorous Varuna. You are the strong Indra who rules over his subjects. You are the Rudra who brings happiness. You permit wonderful deeds to be performed and you bring welfare. You are the lord of all prosperity. You are like Indra's *vajra*. Bring us happiness.

Let this powerful king be the leader. Let him perform the duties of a king and preserve his subjects the way Agni preserves righteous deeds. Let the king's valour increase through truthfulness. O king! You have been blessed with various forms of prosperity. May you be as powerful as the rays of the sun. May the brave warriors of the kingdom preserve the king in their midst.

I advance along the best of paths through the blessings of ten gods. First is Savita of the divine qualities. He is the source of all riches. Second is Prajapati, the ruler of all forms. Third is Pusha, the lord of all animals. Fourth is Vakpati, the lord of the *Vedas* and of all knowledge. Fifth is Indra, who rules over kings. Sixth is the brave Varuna. Seventh is Agni,

the source of all energy. Eighth is Soma, in whom can be found all the traits of a king. Ninth is Vishnu, in whom can be found all qualities. And the tenth is the god who rules over words.

O men! May you be as learned and wise as Surya and Chandrama. May your words be full of knowledge. May you make your country prosper for the sake of your king. May you be strong and may you be the performers of righteous deeds. May you worship the gods and may you be blessed with all the desirable qualities. May you pray to the *paramatman* through *yoga*.

O learned ones! Through your deeds you have attained the proximity of the prosperous Ashvinis. Your words are full of wisdom and you will attain riches. Those who dwell in you country will prosper. Prepare food for those who are aged. Farmers carefully separate the chaff from the grain. Like that, separate out evil deeds from righteous ones. Perform good deeds. Protect the righteous and destroy the evil.

O Ashvinis! You bring welfare to all of mankind. Indra is the destroyer of the demon Namuchi. It is you who aided Indra in this task. It is you who drank the sweet *soma* juice.

O Indra! The two Ashvinis aided you in your task. They protected you the way parents protect their sons. O Indra! You drank the *soma* juice after defeating the demon Namuchi. It is then that Sarasvati pleased you with her words.

This concludes *Adhyaya* ten. Let us now move on to *Adhyaya* fifteen.

Adhyaya fifteen

O omniscient Agni! You are acquainted with all objects. Destroy all our enemies. Protect us from enemies who have not yet emerged. Do not forsake us, but grant us boons with a benevolent heart. May we be blessed with the happiness that your bounties will confer. May we be saved from the radiance of your energy.

O Agni! You are omniscient. Destroy our enemies from all the directions. Destroy even those enemies who have not yet been created. You have the best of minds, advise us on the righteous path. May we be strong in every respect, may all our enemies be destroyed.

The words of these hymns are blessed with all the arts. These hymns will bring us riches. The words of these hymns have in them all forms of strength. These hymns will bring us strength. These hymns will make Agni blaze brighter. They will bring all the gods to us. These hymns are the refuge of those who are strong and valiant. May these hymns bring the devotees immense prosperity.

In speed there is joy. In superiority there is joy. In happiness there is joy. There is joy in enveloping all the directions. There is joy in covering all objects. In the power of the mind there is joy. In vast expanses there is joy. In water there is joy. In the ocean there is joy. In poetry there is joy. In metres there is joy.

(This may seem obscure. In fact, the sense of the hymn is that in metres (*chhanda*) there is joy. Eighteen different metres are mentioned by name, some of which can be interpreted in the literal senses given above. The names of these eighteen metres are *eva*, *variva*, *shambhu*, *paribhu*, *acchata*, *mana*, *vyacha*, *sindhu*, *samudra*, *sariram*, *kakupa*, *trikakupa*, *kavya*, *ankupa*, *aksharapamkti*, *padapamkti*, *vishtarapamkti* and *shurabhraja*.)

O that which grants us the fruits we desire! I bear in mind the foodgrains that sustain the body and revere you. I bear in mind the water that sustains the body and revere you. I bear in mind the night and revere you. I bear in mind the day and revere you. I bear in mind the vast heaven and revere you. I bear in mind the earth where chariots travel and revere you. I bear in mind the noisy wind and revere you. I bear in mind the atmosphere where ghosts and demons dwell and revere you. I bear in mind the food which can be eaten and revere you. I bear in mind the flaming fire and revere you. I bear in mind the power of speech and revere you. I bear in mind the circle of energy and revere you. I bear in mind my childhood and revere you. I bear in mind hunger and revere you. I bear in mind the heaven which grants riches and revere you. I bear in mind the illusions created by solar rays and revere you. I bear in mind the sacrifices which yield knowledge and revere you. I bear in mind my ignorance and revere you. I bear in mind atheism and revere you. I bear in mind pits and stones and revere you.

(This hymn also seems to be exceedingly obscure. But the sense again is that various metres yield joy. Twenty-two different metres are intended and their names are *acchata*, *pracchata*, *samyata*, *viyata*, *vrihata*, *rathantara*, *nikaya*, *vivadha*, *gira*, *bhrajā*, *samstupa*, *anushtupa*, *eva*, *variva*, *vaya*, *vayaskrita*, *vishpardha*, *vishala* *chhadi*, *durohana*, *tandra* and *amkadanka*. Some of these metres can be interpreted in the literal senses given above.)

O men! Be energetic in the pursuit of truth so that truth may be preserved. Use your learning to follow the path of righteousness so that righteousness may be preserved. Forge ahead energetically so that heaven may be pleased. Maintain non-violence and preserve the atmosphere. Make sure that foodgrains grow in abundance and please the earth. Know the monsoon that gives rise to rains. Know the day and know the night. Please the Vasus who have human welfare in their hearts. Learn of the Adityas through your wisdom and please them.

O men! Use the foodgrains to preserve your bodies. Use the riches to sustain your bodies. Protect the *Vedas* and learn the knowledge that is in them. Use the herbs well to make medicines. Nurture your bodies well through food and increase your knowledge through studying. May your energies increase and may you be victorious.

O men! You are intelligent. I praise you because intelligence can be found in you. You are the manifestation of food. I praise you because food can be traced in your bodies. You are the possessors of

wealth. I praise you because wealth can be found in your possession. In you can be found an abundance of energy. I praise you because you are the source of energy.

O men! You are as sacred as sacrifices. I acknowledge your supremacy for the success of the sacrifice. You yourselves are the inspiration behind all action. I acknowledge your supremacy for the success of action. In you can be found excellence of character, and I acknowledge your supremacy for that reason. I acknowledge your supremacy when you do battle with your enemies. You are the ones who invade your foes. I acknowledge you for the sake of your supremacy.

O men who observe sacrifices! You are like the queen who rules over the eastern direction. The eight Vasus bless you. Agni preserves you from all unhappiness. These hymns will establish your supremacy on earth. These offerings of clarified butter will make you great. These *sama* hymns will establish you firmly in the atmosphere. The sages will sing of your glory in heaven. The lord of all the objects in the universe will preserve you. The Vasus and the other gods will bring happiness to all those who observe sacrifices.

O men who observe sacrifices! You are like the vast expanse of the southern direction. The Rudras will bless you. The god Indra will protect you from disease. These hymns will establish your supremacy on earth. These offerings will make you great. These *sama* hymns will establish you firmly in the atmosphere.

The sages will sing of your glory in heaven. The lord who brings welfare will make you great. The Vasus and the other gods will bring happiness to all those who observe sacrifices; they will establish them in heaven.

O men who observe sacrifices! You are like the radiance of the western direction. The Adityas will preserve you through their divine qualities. Varuna will save you from unhappiness and these hymns will establish your supremacy on earth. Weapons will make you firm and strong. These *sama* hymns will establish you firmly in the atmosphere. The sages will sing of your glory in heaven. The best of the gods will make you great. The Vasus and the other gods will bring happiness to all those who observe sacrifices and establish them in heaven.

O men who observe sacrifices! You are like the light of the northern direction. The Maruts will protect you. Soma will not permit disease to come near you. These hymns will establish your supremacy on earth. Weapons will make you firm and strong. These *sama* hymns will establish you firmly in the atmosphere. The sages will sing of your glory in heaven. The gods who ensure the success of all action will make you great. The Vasus and the other gods will bring happiness to all those who observe sacrifices; they will establish them in heaven.

O men who observe sacrifices! You are like the lofty upper direction. All the gods are your protectors. Brihaspati will preserve you from all unhappiness. These hymns will establish your supremacy on earth.

Agni and the Maruts will make you firm and strong. These *sama* hymns will establish you firmly in the atmosphere. The sages will sing of your glory in heaven. The gods who grant desired fruits will make you great. The Vasus and the other gods will bring happiness to all those who observe sacrifices and establish them in heaven.

Agni is present in the eastern direction. His hue is golden and his radiance is like the rays of the sun. Wonderful is Agni's chariot and the spring season is like Agni's charioteer. Great is the learning that can be found with Agni. His weapons are as powerful as fierce animals like tigers. I bow down before Agni with all my offerings. May Agni and his companions bring me happiness and protection. May those who hate me be destroyed.

Vayu is present in the southern direction. He controls all action. Wonderful is Vayu's chariot and the summer season is like Vayu's charioteer. Two *apsaras* (dancers of heaven) named Yatudhana and Heti ride on Vayu's chariot. His weapons are as fierce as terrible demons. I bow down before Vayu with all my offerings. May Vayu and his companions bring me happiness and protection. May those who hate me be destroyed.

Aditya is present in the western direction. (The word Aditya is used here in the singular). He is the one who makes the entire universe manifest. Wonderful is Aditya's chariot and the monsoon season is like Aditya's charioteer. Two *apsaras* named Sarpa and Praheti ride on Aditya's chariot. His weapons are as

powerful as tigers. I bow down before Aditya with all my offerings. May Aditya and his companions bring me happiness and protection. May those who hate me be destroyed.

Yajna is present in the northern direction. (This god is a personification of *yajna* or sacrifice.) He is the one who grants riches. His weapons are as fierce as birds of prey that roam in the sky. Wonderful is Yajna's chariot and the autumn season is like Yajna's charioteer. The two *apsaras* Heti and Praheti ride on Yajna's chariot. I bow down before Yajna with all my offerings. May Yajna and his companions bring me happiness and protection. May those who hate me be destroyed.

Parjanya is present in the upper direction. He is the one who grants all desires. Wonderful is his chariot and the late autumn season is like Parjanya's charioteer. The two *apsaras* Heti and Praheti ride on Parjanya's chariot. His weapons are as sharp as the lightning. I bow down before Parjanya with all my offerings. May Parjanya and his companions bring me happiness and protection. May those who hate me be destroyed.

Agni is supreme in heaven. He is as lofty as the shoulder of a bull. Agni is the lord of this earth. He is the one who nurtures the water.

Agni is omniscient. He is the one who grants a thousand forms of happiness. He is the one who grants a thousand forms of riches and foodgrains. He is as lofty as one's head and he is the source of the supreme wisdom.

O Agni! The priests who are the most learned, the priests who are the best among all the priests on earth, have brought you into being by rubbing two sticks together. You have descended in our midst from the sky. You are high and lofty.

O Agni! The flames of your tongue spread to accept the oblations that we have offered. You are the one who ensures that the sacrifice will be a success. You are the one who grants excellent horses and other objects. You are the one who makes the Adityas happy in heaven.

Agni's fires are lit through the firewood collected by men. Men are inspired at the sight of dawn, the way a calf is inspired at the sight of the mother cow. (This is relevant because sacrifices commenced when it was dawn.) Agni's shining flames rise upwards towards heaven. It is almost as if a bird is rising up into the highest parts of the sky.

We pray to the Agni who is omniscient. We pray to the Agni who rules over sacrifices. Men use words, food and hymns to welcome the *ahavaniya* fire. Oblations are offered and Agni is praised, the way the sun is praised at the time of the evening.

Agni is the one who summons the gods to our midst. Agni is the one who presides over the sacrifice. It is Agni whom the priests praise through their hymns. It is Agni whom the sages establish on the occasion of a sacrifice. The sage Bhrigu had many sons. He lit the flames of Agni in the middle of a forest.

Agni protects those who perform sacrifices. Agni never sleeps, but is ever awake. Agni is skilled. Agni is pure. It is to Agni that clarified butter is offered on the occasion of a sacrifice. It is Agni who is lit by the sages on the occasion of a sacrifice. Agni's radiant flames rise upwards towards heaven.

O Agni! You are the beloved of the sages Angirasa. (There were several sages named Angirasa. In fact, it is not quite clear that the Angirasa were sages. The *Vedas* often suggest that they were a semi-divine species and were Agni's companions.) You resided in caves and in trees. But the Angirasa obtained you in their midst and were blessed. O Agni! You blaze forth when you are obtained by rubbing two sticks together. It is because you are so strong that the sages have addressed you as the son of strength.

O Mitra! Those who are learned have prayed to you for foodgrains so that these may be offered as oblations to the great Agni.

O Agni! You are strong and you are the lord of all that there is. Grant the desired fruits to the ones who are performing this sacrifice. We have prepared a pyre for you to the north of the place where the sacrifice is being held. Be seated there. Great is your fame. You will be pleased and will grant us wonderful riches.

O Agni! You are the lord of action and riches. All your subjects call upon you to come and accept their oblations.

I call upon the immortal Agni with these offerings of foodgrains. I call upon the Agni who has his origin

in water and who is the source of all learning. I call upon the Agni who is always energetic and who brings fruition to sacrifices. I call upon the Agni who is like a messenger for the gods.

Agni is immortal, he is the messenger. Agni can never be destroyed. I call upon the Agni who is not stirred by anger. I call upon the Agni to whom the best of the oblations are offered. Agni has two steeds, harnessed to his chariot. When we call upon him, he swiftly arrives in our midst.

This sacrifice is the best of sacrifices, and has the best of priests. Agni has been summoned to the sacrifice in the prescribed fashion. He will come here and shower the performer of the sacrifice with riches. Once Agni comes, Vasu, Rudra and the other gods will also come to the sacrifice.

O Agni! You are omniscient, you are the son of strength. You are the lord of foodgrains and cows. Grant us riches.

O Agni! You are the source of all happiness. You are radiant and you are the one who establishes all objects. You are omniscient and the *Vedas* are full of praise for you. You are the one who presides over sacrifices. Make your presence felt and grant us riches.

O Agni! You are the shining one. Your tongues are as sharp as the *vajra*. You are famous as the destroyer of the demons. Destroy the demons who are here during the day and destroy the ones who are here at the time of dawn.

O Agni! You are prosperous and learned. The priests have lit you for the sake of our welfare. You will grant us boons and you will make the sacrifice a success. We chant these hymns to you so that you may bring us happiness.

O Agni! So great are your mental powers that you vanquish all your enemies in battle. Use those mental powers to protect us in the course of battle. We pray to you so that our welfare may be increased.

O Agni! Great are your powers. You destroy your enemies in battle. They are deluded and become immobile. The strings of their bows snap. Use those powers to bring us prosperity.

I know the Agni who is the one who establishes every object. I am acquainted with the Agni whose blessings make steeds strong and swift. I know the Agni whose energy brings the cows safely back to their cowsheds. O Agni! I am praying to you. Make my house full of foodgrains.

I pray to Agni. Riches and prosperity are nothing but manifestations of Agni's being. Agni is the lord of cows and fleet-footed steeds. Those who are blessed at birth and those who are learned worship the divine qualities of Agni. O Agni! Grant a plentiful supply of foodgrains to your devotees.

O Agni! You bring us as much of happiness as Chandrama does. You accept our offerings of clarified butter with your tongues. You are the lord of all strength. This sacrifice is being performed for you, it is to you that hymns are being sung. Grant us riches and foodgrains.

Food nurtures a steed that is swift. A true devotee nurtures a sacrifice. O Agni! Nurture the *sama* hymns that we are chanting on the occasion of the sacrifice.

O Agni! You are skilled and you will bring us welfare. You will aid us in the performing of wonderful deeds and you will grant us the fruits of our desire. You are great, you are the sustainer of a true sacrifice. Come and be our leader.

O Agni! Be pleased at the prayers that are being chanted for your benefit. Be present before us with all your rays. May you flood us with your radiance the way the sun floods the earth at the time of sunrise.

Agni is the possessor of divine qualities. Agni is the one who nurtures sacrifices. Agni is the one whose flames attain the lofty gods. Agni is the one who desires to drink the clarified butter that is offered at the time of sacrifices. Agni will establish everyone. Agni will summon the gods. Agni is the son of strength; he has been created through the rubbing together of sticks. Agni is the learned one, he is well-versed in all the sacred texts (*shastras*). I revere Agni as much as I revere a *brahmana*.

O Agni! You are the one who is closest to us. You are the one who brings us happiness. You are our protector. Bring welfare to our houses. You are like a leader, you are the performer of wonderful deeds. You are the lord of riches. O pure Agni! Come to the place where we are holding the sacrifice. Grant us riches. O handsome one! We ask of you the riches that will make us radiant.

The sages perform sacrifices through their powers of meditation. They light the flames of Agni so as to obtain true bliss. I pray to Agni so that I may obtain the same happiness. The learned refer to Agni as the one who makes the expanse of the sky vast.

O Agni! You are blessed with divine qualities. You rule in heaven. I crave for the bliss that there is in heaven through my good deeds. I perform this sacrifice with my lawful wives for your sake. I perform this sacrifice with my sons for your sake. I perform this sacrifice with my brothers for your sake.

Agni is the lord of the universe. Agni is the one who preserves righteous people. Agni is learned. The radiant Agni is established on earth; he is praised through our words. Enemy soldiers who wish to fight with us are destroyed by Agni.

The brave Agni is the one who accepts our oblations. Agni is the performer of a thousand wonderful deeds. Agni is shining; he does not hesitate in the course of performing any action. Let Agni shine on earth and make us feel the radiance that there is in heaven.

O men! All of you come close to Agni. Come close to Agni and receive him in your midst. O Agni! Display to us the path that leads to the gods. Display to us the path that leads to the ancestors. The sages have summoned you on the occasion of the sacrifice.

O Agni! Arise and awake. Awaken every day the person who desires to perform a sacrifice. Ensure that good deeds are performed. Such righteous deeds

include donation and meditation. May the bodies of those who perform such deeds be pure and may their houses be full. It is through your blessing that the performer of the sacrifice will receive whatever boon he wants. O lord of the universe! Your proximity will grant us our desires and your proximity will free us from all sin. May we always be desirous of performing sacrifices.

O Agni! Reside in our households as *garhapatya agni*. Be present in all the seasons and grant us riches.

O Agni! Our sacrifices are accompanied by the giving of fees (*dakshina*). Make sure the sacrifices are a success. Bring the gods to our sacrifice and thereby ensure our proximity to heaven.

The months of Magha and Falguna constitute winter (*shishira*). O Agni! You are the flaming fire. Be constant and firm. May heaven and earth bring us happiness through your grace. May water and *soma* and other herbs bring us happiness through your grace. May all the different forms of fire bless those who are performing sacrifices. There are many forms of fire in heaven and on earth. May all these various forms of fire thrive in the winter season. Just as Indra is the refuge of the gods, may Agni be the refuge of all the seasons. Reside with the Angirasa and make them great.

O goddess! You are full of energy. Vishvakarma established you atop heaven. Surya is your husband. Grant those who perform sacrifices the breath of life. Make them superior through your energy. Use the

influence of the gods to make sure that Angirasa are firm in their resolve to perform the sacrifice.

(It is not clear which goddess is being addressed.)

You will fill up the world so that no holes remain. You will be firm and constant. Indra, Agni, Brihaspati and the other gods have established you.

(This is another hymn addressed to the same goddess.)

The sun's rays mix with water in heaven. They have been there since the time when the gods were created. The performer of the sacrifice is located in one of the three worlds. He prepares the *soma* juice.

The words of the *Vedas* are as vast as the ocean. Like a great warrior surrounded by minor warriors, the words of the *Vedas* surround Indra. Indra is the lord of all foodgrains.

Agni is lit by rubbing two sticks together. The sound that the fire makes then is like the sound made by a horse which is hungry for grass. The sound of the fire raging attracts the wind and Vayu follows Agni's path. The trail that the fire leaves is black of hue.

The god named Ayu is as grim as the ocean; he is the ruler. Luminiscent Agni is established right in the middle of Ayu's heart. Agni lights up heaven and the atmosphere.

Vishvakarma is the creator and he established you on heaven's pinnacle. You are the breath of life that courses through all living beings. You are the one who

aids the performance of righteous deeds. May Surya preserve you in all the directions. May heaven find pleasure in you. Protect all beings through your energy and be as constant as the Angirasa.

(This is a hymn addressed to a goddess whose identification is not clear. But obviously the earlier hymn was also addressed to the same goddess.)

O Agni! Be full of a thousand powers. Be the manifestation of a thousand riches. Be strong. Have a thousand forms of strength. Live in thousands of lofty places. You deserve to be the ruler of thousands. I appoint you as the ruler of a thousand subjects.

This concludes *Adhyaya* fifteen. We now move on to *Adhyaya* twenty.

Adhyaya twenty

O king! You are the refuge of the power of *kshatriyas* and the power of the kingdom. You are the centre of all martial prowess. May you never kill your subjects and may your subjects never kill you.

Let the one who is a leader of men follow the path of truth and observe religious rites. Let him be intelligent and a man of action. Let him be the best of men. O king! Protect your subjects from death. Protect them from lightning and other catastrophes.

O king! Savita will bless you at the time of your coronation. The two Ashvins and Pusha will bring you bounties with their arms. The Ashvins will bless your coronation with their healing powers. May the wisdom that is in the *Vedas* vest with you. You are

being crowned so that foodgrains may grow, and so that Sarasvati may impart her power to the herbs. You are being crowned so that Indra's strength and intelligence may increase. May we obtain prosperity and fame as your subjects.

O king! May you be the performer of righteous deeds. May you bring welfare. May you rule in the light of truth. May you be the fount of happiness. I crown you so that you may be the receptacle of the wisdom of the *Vedas* and of the knowledge of the *brahman* (the divine essence).

O subjects! I have been crowned as the king of this land. Different parts of my body will correspond to various traits of my kingdom. The prosperity of the kingdom will be my head, the fame of the kingdom will be my face, the truth that prevails in the kingdom will be my hair, beard and moustache, the life of the kingdom will be my breath of life, the throne will be like my eyes and the various assemblies of learned subjects will be my ears. I will carefully rule in the name of all that is righteous.

(This and the succeeding hymns are being sung by the king.)

May my tongue be the source of sweet words, may my speech bring glory to the kingdom and my mind be the source of rage for those who are evil. My anger will aid me in ruling the kingdom well, my fingers will bring joy to the kingdom and my body will contribute to its happiness. My friends will help me in defeating my enemies.

My two arms will be full of strength. All my senses will also be powerful. My arms will spur me to action and enable me to perform valorous deeds. My heart will be full of martial traits.

My shoulders will be vast so that I can support the kingdom. I will look after my subjects the way I look after my stomach, shoulders, neck, thighs, waist and other parts of my anatomy. That is, I will take good care of my subjects.

I will be the source of knowledge and prosperity for my kingdom. I am the king who has been crowned, I will rule over my subjects in accordance with the norms of righteousness.

I am the lord of this kingdom and I will protect it from all decay. I will ensure its prosperity and I will ensure that my kingdom is full of cows, horses and all manner of riches. I will be like the soul of the kingdom. I will be like its breath of life. I will rule so that I become dear to heaven.

May the eleven gods of heaven, the eleven gods of the atmosphere, and the eleven gods of the earth protect me. May the learned Brihaspati, the leader of the gods, spur them to bless me with their divine qualities. May all the gods protect me.

(You will recollect that in an introductory section, we stated that there were thirty-three gods, eleven for each of the three *lokas*. Brihaspati is the leader of the gods in the sense of being their preceptor.)

Prithivi and the other Vasus will make sure that I attain my desires. The eleven Rudras will make sure that I attain my desires. The twelve Adityas will make sure that I attain my desires. The truest of the true, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda* and the *Rig Veda*, will make sure that I attain my desires. The *mantras* uttered on the occasion of the sacrifices and the sacrificial oblations will make sure that I attain my desires.

(Thirty-three gods are obtained by adding the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twelve Adityas, Prajapati and the *brahman*. The eight Vasus are Prithivi, Apa, Teja, Vayu, Akasha, Kala, Disha and Atma. Alternatively, they are sometimes stated to be Apa, Dhruva, Soma, Ghara, Anila, Anala, Pratyusha and Prabhata. The eleven Rudras are Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana, Samana, Naga, Kurma, Krikala, Devadatta, Dhananjaya and Atma. The twelve Adityas are Chaitra, Vaishakha, Jyeshtha, Ashada, Shravana, Bhadrapada, Ashvina, Kartika, Margashirsha, Pousha, Magha and Falguna. That is, the twelve Adityas are the twelve solar months. Alternatively, the twelve Adityas are referred to as Dhata, Mitra, Aryama, Rudra, Varuna, Surya, Bhaga, Vivasvana, Pusha, Savita, Tvashta and Vishnu.)

The hair on my body will be sensitive to the needs of the kingdom. My skin and bones will be sensitive to the needs of the kingdom. My bones and marrow will serve the world and be sensitive to the needs of the kingdom.



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O radiant gods! May the god Agni free me of all the sins that I have committed so as to offend the gods. May the god Agni preserve me from all manner of sinful deeds.

The god Vayu will free me from all the sins that I may have committed during the day or during the night.

The god Surya will free me from all the sins that I may have committed while I was sleeping or while I was awake.

The gods will free me from all the sins that I may have committed in villages, in forests or in assemblies. May all the sins that I have committed through my various senses be pardoned.

O Varuna! I may have committed the crime of stating that cows can be killed. Pardon me that sin. O Varuna! You are swift of foot. But tarry a while with me. Free me from the sins that I may have committed against the gods, free me from the sins that I may have committed against men. O Varuna! Protect me from the violent enemies who hate me.

O Soma! Your heart mingles with the water of the ocean. May your heart mix with the water and the herbs. May they bring you pleasure. May the water and the herbs protect me from those who hate me and from those whom I hate.

May the water purify me from all sin. A man who has sweated becomes clean after he has bathed. May I be cleansed thus. May I be purified the way clarified butter becomes pure once it is strained.

Surya provides light to the world that is the best of all the worlds. May Surya's blazing radiance protect me from the darkness.

O Agni! I have come to you after sanctifying this water. Bless me with riches so that my subjects may prosper.

O Agni! You are the one who grants intelligence; may I have intelligence. You are the one who grants energy; may I have energy. Please ensure that this earth brings me happiness. May Usha bring me happiness. May Surya bring me happiness. May this entire universe bring me happiness. O Agni! Make all living beings energetic. May I attain all the objects that I want. I offer these oblations to you; please accept them.

O Agni! You are the one who ensures that religious rites are observed. I have decided to perform a sacrifice and I offer these oblations to you. I light your flames so that the sacrifice may be successful.

Blessed is a land where *brahmanas* and *kshatriyas* unite in the performance of religious deeds. That land is sacred and free of all evil. The learned inhabitants of that land are as radiant as Agni.

I know for a fact that the world where Indra and Vayu live together is blessed. There is no misery in that world, nor is there a lack of foodgrains.

O *soma* juice ! You are part of Soma's being and may you bring us happiness.

Those who crush *soma* herbs and extract the *soma* juice are blessed with strength. Strong are those who drink the *soma* juice. But those who merely talk without acting, obtain nothing at all.

O Indra! In the morning we have offered you riches, curds, balls of flour and cakes (*purodasha*). Please accept these and listen to our hymns.

O Maruts! Chant *sama* hymns in praise of the valorous Indra, the destroyer of the demon Vritra. The hymns that the officiating priests chant on the occasion of the sacrifice speak of Indra's glory.

O priests! Bring the *soma* juice here. Purify it so that it may be offered to Indra.

I pray to the *paramatman*. He is the lord of all living beings and all the worlds find refuge in his being. He is the greatest of the great, he is the one who controls all objects.

O Ashvins! I pray to the two of you so that you may be kindly disposed towards me. I pray to you for the sake of Indra and Sarasvati. I pray to you for the sake of protection.

O Ashvins! You will protect our lives and you will protect all the *kshatriyas*. You will make our speech pure and you will guide us along the righteous path.

I partake of this food in the name of the two Ashvins. I partake of this food in the name of Sarasvati. I partake of this food in the name of Indra, the protector.

Indra blazes with radiance. At the time of dawn, he manifests himself as the sun in the eastern sky. He arrives with the thirty-three gods. He is the wielder of the *vajra*. He is the killer of the demon Vritra. He is the one who broke open the doors of the fortresses.

Indra is prayed to by countless people. He is the life of sacrifices and he is the one who created wonderful objects. Indra is valiant, his form never fades and he is the one who provides milk in cattle. Our offerings of clarified butter increase Indra's energy. Indra's form is more golden than gold itself. Learned is the great god whom everyone worships. He is the only one who can be our refuge.

The gods themselves worship the manifold rays of Agni. He is the one for whom sacrifices are observed. He is the one to whom offerings are made by the sacrificial priests. Agni is strong. He destroys the cities of his enemies and demolishes the fortresses of the demons. Agni's arms are as strong as the *vajra*. May he come to our sacrifice.

Indra's rays radiate out. He is the pleasant one who performs fantastic deeds. Indra is accompanied by the twelve Adityas and the eight Vasus. Indra will bring us joy. He will ascend the seat we have reserved for him on the occasion of the sacrifice.

Like a wife is united with her husband, we will be united with Indra. He will bring strength to the brave king. He will spread the king's fame and bring victory over the enemies.

Usha and Ratri (the night) bring fame to the great Indra. They are as sacred as beautiful cows which give an abundant supply of milk.

Those who are desirous of observing a sacrifice first pray to Indra. Indra is the one who is the foremost. Vayu and Agni are also summoned on the occasions of sacrifices.

The three goddesses Sarasvati, Bharati and Ila will come with Indra when he comes to attend the sacrifice. They will ensure that our offerings of milk are blessed.

Indra is the performer of excellent deeds, the brave warrior who destroys the power of enemies. The famous Indra performs acts that are unsurpassed by others. May Indra be worshipped and may he bring us the fruits of our desire. May Indra be present at our sacrifice. May he claim the best of seats and may he bring the other gods to the sacrifice.

Indra manifests himself in his radiance. Gigantic trees like the banyan were created so that they might bring peace and happiness to the world. They are like Indra's belly when it has been satiated with food. We have made offerings of clarified butter and honey on the occasion of the sacrifice. Indra will accept these offerings.

Indra is strong; he destroys the enemies. He showers down happiness the way a cloud showers down rain. These offerings of clarified butter will please Indra. He and the other immortal gods will accept our offerings of *soma* juice, and be pleased.

Let Indra be near us and grant us protection. Let him be pleased through this praise so that he may bring us joy. Let Indra increase our strength and power. Let him increase our intelligence. May we be able to vanquish our enemies. And may Indra make our martial prowess as powerful as Surya's energy.

Let Indra be close to us. He is the one who fulfils all desires. He is the powerful one who protects all men. He is the wielder of the *vajra*. Indra defeats his enemies, in battles big and small. Let Indra come to us and offer us protection.

Indra is the possessor of myriad riches. He is the wielder of the great *vajra*. Let him come for our protection and let him increase our prosperity. Let him climb onto his horses and come to our sacrifice.

I pray to Indra who is our protector. I call him to every sacrifice so that he may offer us deliverance. He is the one who is worshipped by many. I call upon Indra. May he bring us welfare.

Indra is the one who preserves righteous deeds. Indra is the one who will come to our aid. He is the one who will grant riches and foodgrains. He will be the king who will bring us happiness. May Indra bring misery to those who are opposed to him. May he free us from all the manner of fear. Indra will bless his subjects so that they become powerful and fearless.

May Indra look upon us with favour, may he look upon us with benevolence. Even if Indra is not close to us, he will grant us protection and prosperity. He will

make those who bear hatred towards us maintain their distance.

O Indra! Your body-hair have the colour of peacock feathers. Your voice is like the sound of thunder. Come to us on your horses. Hunters capture birds in their nooses and nets. But there is no enemy who can capture you. The enemies may be terrible, but they are scattered by the valour of your bow.

Indra showers us with the objects that we desire; his arm is as powerful as the *vajra*. It is to Indra that the sage Vashishtha prayed through his *mantras*. The performer of brave deeds will bless us with valour and with cows and other animals. He will be our protector. O priests! Your prayers will please Indra and bring us protection.

O Ashvins! Agni is full of energy and that energy has mixed with this *soma* juice. Accept these offerings of *soma* juice. Sarasvati herself has aided in the extraction of this *soma* juice. This sacrifice has been blessed through her presence.

The two Ashvins cure all manner of illnesses. Sarasvati fills all the words with sweetness. Sarasvati and the Ashvins will take us closer to Indra.

Sarasvati has helped in the preparation of this *soma* juice so that it may be offered to Indra on the occasion of the sacrifice. The Ashvins have provided the herbs from which the *soma* juice has been obtained.

(Sarasvati connotes a river. What is probably meant by Sarasvati helping is that the waters of the river have been mixed with the *soma* juice.)

Sarasvati and the two Ashvinis will summon Indra to the sacrifice. They have sharpened Indra's senses and given him strength so that he may grant us riches.

The two Ashvinis mixed *soma* juice with the juices of other herbs. The *soma* juice was stolen by the demon Namuchi. But Sarasvati stole the juice from the demon and offered it to Indra.

The Ashvinis, Sarasvati and Indra will grant us our desires. They are like the door of the sacrifice; they will make heaven and earth complete.

Sarasvati and the Ashvinis increase Indra's strength, be it morning, evening, night or day.

O Ashvinis! Protect us during the day. O Sarasvati! Protect us during the night. O goddess and O physicians of the gods! Be united in your desire to prepare the *soma* juice and offer it to Indra.

The two Ashvinis and the three goddesses unite to prepare the *soma* juice for Indra. The three goddesses are Sarasvati, Bharati and Ila. The *soma* juice brings happiness.

When the *soma* juice has been prepared, the Ashvinis bring herbs. The juice from these herbs is mixed with the *soma* juice. Sarasvati brings other herbs from which the juice can be extracted. The god Tvashta imparts a beauteous form to the *soma* juice.

Indra is the lord of the forests. In every season, Indra mixes foodgrains with the *soma* juice. The Ashvinis and Sarasvati impart sweetness to the *soma* juice.

O Ashvinis! Unite with Sarasvati in mixing the juices of herbs with the *soma* juice. Offer the sweet *soma* juice as an offering to Indra.

The demon Namuchi possessed many offerings and riches. The Ashvinis and Sarasvati robbed Namuchi of these possessions and brought them for Indra.

The two Ashvinis and Sarasvati united to increase Indra's valour through these offerings. Indra destroyed the strength of the demon Namuchi.

The Ashvinis and Sarasvati are to be praised. They are to be praised as they made offerings to Indra.

The gods Savita, Varuna and Bhaga increased Indra's strength and sharpened his senses. They offered oblations to the protector.

Indra robbed the demon Namuchi of his riches, senses and power. Savita and Varuna granted boons of strength and riches to the devotees.

Indra and Savita are the gods who increase fame. They are the ones who increase prosperity and martial prowess.

Sarasvati and the two Ashvinis offer cows, horses, riches, strength and valour to their devotees.

The Ashvinis traverse a golden path and are handsome of appearance. O Ashvinis, Sarasvati and

Indra! Please protect us while we are performing this sacrifice.

The Ashvinis are physicians who perform beauteous deeds. Sarasvati fulfils our desires. Indra is the destroyer of the demon Vritra.

O Ashvinis! O Sarasvati! Be united. The demon Namuchi has the *soma* juice. Take it away from him and offer it to Indra. Drink it yourself.

O Indra! The Ashvinis will protect you with their *mantras*. They will protect you the way a son is protected by his parents. O Indra! Drink the *soma* juice and increase your strength. Sarasvati will look upon you with favour.

Agni is the one who will accept our offerings of foodgrains, he will drink the *soma* juice we have offered. He will make himself manifest and grant us horses, bulls, cows and sheep. He will grant us protection.

O Agni! Accept these oblations with your tongues. Accept these offerings of clarified butter, accept these offerings of *soma* juice. Grant us foodgrains, brave sons and riches. You will grant us the greatness that brings fame.

The two Ashvinis bring energy to the eyes. Sarasvati brings strength to life and Indra brings sound to speech.

O Ashvinis! You are the performers of that which is true. You are the brave ones who make the evil weep.

Grant us boons of cows and horses. Make us traverse the righteous path.

O Ashvinis! You are the ones who give rise to rain. May the enemies who slander us be unable to bring us harm. May those who do not associate with us be unable to bring us harm.

O Ashvinis! You are the ones who establish all objects. The two of you will bring us yellow gold and other riches.

Sarasvati will energise our sacrifice. She is the one who purifies. She is the one who grants foodgrains, riches and intelligence.

Sarasvati inspires us to excellent speech, she increases our wisdom. May Sarasvati make this sacrifice a success.

Through her wisdom Sarasvati imparts intelligence to the sky. She is the manifestation of all wisdom.

O Indra! You are handsome and many are your manifestations. Come here and bless those who wish to be close to you. We have prepared this *soma* juice with our own fingers. We have purified it. Accept it.

O Indra! Those who are wise pray to you. Those who are learned pray to you. And those who desire riches also pray to you. Come here and grant us riches, fame and foodgrains.

O Indra! You are the possessor of the best of horses. Come quickly to the sacrifice and be close to those who are chanting the *mantras*. Drink the *soma* juice we have offered. Accept the oblations we have offered.

May Sarasvati and the two Ashvinis unite and drink the *soma* juice. May Indra, the destroyer of the demon Vritra, drink the *soma* juice.

This the end of *Adhyaya* twenty. We will skip some chapters and move on to *Adhyaya* twenty-five.

Adhyaya twenty-five

I please the sweet grass with my teeth. With the roots of my teeth I please the expanse where the sweet grass grows. The back of my teeth brings pleasure to the earth and the front of my teeth brings pleasure to the god Tega. The tip of my tongue will please Sarasvati and my tongue will please the god Utsada. My palate brings pleasure to the god Avakandra and my two lips bring pleasure to foodgrains. I will please the god Apa through my mouth and my beard and moustaches will please the Adityas. My eyebrows bring pleasure to the god Pantha and my eyelashes bring pleasure to Dyavaprithivi. The centre of my forehead pleases the god of lightning. I offer these oblations to the god of fairness (Shukladeva), I offer these oblations to the god of darkness (Krishnadeva). The top of my eyes worships the god Para and the bottom of my eyes worships the god Roma.

Through my breath of life I worship the gods Vata and Nasika. My lower lips worship the god Upayama and my upper lips worship the god Sata. The upper part of my body is for the pleasure of the god Antara and the lower part of my body is for the pleasure of the god Brahma. My head is for the pleasure of the

god Niveshya and the bones of my head are for the pleasure of the god Stananiyatnu. With the centre of my head I worship the god Ashani and with my eyes I worship the god of lightning. With my ears and my throat I worship various other gods. With my head I worship the goddess Aditi.

With my hair I worship the god Mashakan. With my action I worship Indra and with my gait I worship Brihaspati. With my calves I worship the god Kapinjala and with my arms I worship the god Marga. With my thighs I worship the gods Aranya and Agni, with my hands I worship Pusha, and with my shoulders I worship the Ashvinis. With the joints of my body I worship Rudra.

The first joint on my right is for Agni, the second joint is for Vayu, the third for Indra, the fourth for Soma, the fifth for Aditi, the sixth for Indrani (Indra's wife), the seventh for the Maruts, the eighth for Brihaspati, the ninth for Aryama, the tenth for Dhata, the eleventh for Indra, the twelfth for Varuna, and the thirteenth for Yama.

The first joint on my left is for Indra and Agni, the second joint is for Sarasvati, the third for Mitra, the fourth for the god of waters, the fifth for Agni, the sixth for Soma, the seventh for the god of the snakes, the eighth for Vishnu, the ninth for Pusha, the tenth for Tvashta, the eleventh for Indra, the twelfth for Varuna, and the thirteenth for Yama.

(In both of these hymns, by 'joints' are meant joints of the body.)

The kingdom is like a body. The tents of the soldiers are like the kingdom's shoulders. The righteous path indicated by the gods is the soul. The general and the king are like the legs of the kingdom and the learned citizens are like the waist.

In any body, the lap is Indra's and the feet belong to Aditi. Aditi, Dyou and Prithivi can be found in the human body. The clouds are like the blood that there is in the body and the arteries of the heart are like the atmosphere. The sky is like the intestine and the clouds are like the spleen. Termite-hills can be likened to the liver and creepers can be likened to the veins of the heart. The various veins and arteries in the body are like creepers and the pools of blood in the body resemble ponds. The stomach is like an ocean. The fire named Vaishvanara is like the juices in the stomach which digest the food.

Compare the energy that holds up the universe to the navel. Compare clarified butter to the strength of the body. Compared the learned in the kingdom to the digestive juices. The sun is to be compared to the fat of the body and the morning dew to the body-heat. Trees can be compared to the fat and the water which makes trees thrive to the water that there is in the body. The lightning in the sky can be compared to the eyes. Wonderful places in the kingdom can be compared to various parts of the anatomy. The stars can also be compared to various parts of the body. The earth can be compared to the skin of the body. These offerings are being made to the god Varuna.

Surya and other objects that are full of energy are manifestations of the *paramatman*. The *paramatman* was present before the universe was created. It is the *paramatman* which is the lord of the universe. The *paramatman* bears aloft heaven and earth and the *paramatman* is the source of all happiness. We make these offerings to the *paramatman*.

The powers of the *paramatman* created life and sight in all living beings that populate the universe. The *paramatman* is the lord of the universe. The *paramatman* is the lord of bipeds like humans and birds and quadrupeds like cows and elephants. The *paramatman* is the lord of all subjects (*prajapati*). We make these offerings to Prajapati.

The powers of the *paramatman* created these snow-clad mountains and the great oceans. The powers of the *paramatman* created all the directions. The *paramatman* is the source of all happiness and is full of divine qualities. We make these offerings to the *paramatman*.

The *paramatman* is the granter of physical and spiritual strength. All the gods follow the path laid down by the *paramatman*. The *paramatman* is the source of all bliss and immortality. To forsake the *paramatman* is to be close to death. The *paramatman* is the source of all happiness. We make these offerings to the *paramatman*.

May we obtain the objects of our desire and may these fruits bring us happiness. May these objects be everlasting and may they surpass all the fruits that

others may have obtained before. May these objects bring us wisdom. The gods will be energetic in providing us learning and protection.

The god follow a constant and straight path; they will grant us wisdom and other boons. May they look upon us with favour and be like our friends. May they grant us long lives and intelligence.

We pray to Bhaga, Mitra, Aditi, Daksha, Aryama, Varuna, Soma and the two Ashvinis so that we may be preserved from destruction. We pray to the knowledge manifest in the *Vedas* so that we may be protected. May the goddess Sarasvati bring us welfare and good fortune.

Vayu will be close to us and will bring us herbs that are a source of happiness and banish all manner of disease. The mother earth will be the source of a plentiful supply of foodgrains. Heaven will provide us with the energy that is the source of happiness. Heaven will make the water flourish. Soma will bring us herbs. O Ashvinis! You are the ones who will bear us. Please bring us all manner of happiness.

O men! Let us pray to the *paramatman* for our protection. Let us call upon the *paramatman* who is the protector of all objects in the universe. May our intelligence be purified through these prayers. The *paramatman* will strengthen our learning, protect us from death and bring us happiness.

The *paramatman* is the performer of wonderful deeds and may we obtain happiness from that great source. The *paramatman* is the source of the learning

that there is in the *Vedas*. It will bring us welfare. The *paramatman* is everywhere and it cannot be splintered. May the great Brihaspati bring us happiness.

The Maruts are as swift as strong steeds; they are the ones who encompass the sky. The Maruts give birth to clouds in the atmosphere. The Maruts have the energy of Agni, and Surya is like their eyes. They are the possessors of divine qualities. The Maruts will come here for our welfare and will protect us.

O gods who are the possessors of divine qualities! May we listen to sweet speech. O officiating priests! May we only look upon objects that bring us happiness. We pray to the supreme godhead and praise him. The learned have decreed a life span for humans. May we attain that lifespan and be blessed in various ways.

O gods! You are the possessors of divine qualities. May we live to see a hundred autumns, may we not die before that. (That is, may we live to be a hundred years.) May we not die before our sons have themselves become fathers.

May heaven be the source of infinite strength. May the atmosphere be the source of infinite strength. May the earth be the source of infinite strength. May the *paramatman* protect all living beings from being ever destroyed. The gods are never destroyed. Five types of men are never destroyed. The world that is constituted of the five elements is never destroyed. The one who is born first is never destroyed.

(This needs some explanation. The five types of men refers to the five classes or castes—*brahmanas*, *kshatriyas*, *vaishyas*, *shudras* and *nishadas*. *Brahmanas* were priests, *kshatriyas* warriors, *vaishyas* traders, *shudras* a serving class; *nishadas* were hunters. The sense of one who is born first never being destroyed is not clear either. The idea is that there is a constant cycle of birth. Those who were born earlier are destroyed, but others are born to take their place. In this fashion, the world is never destroyed.)

Mitra, Varuna, Aryama, Vayu, Indra, Ribhu and the Maruts will look upon us with favour. The gods are the possessors of divine qualities, to them we pray for strength and prosperity.

One who follows the path indicated by the supreme godhead is energised like the sun when it rises in the east. Such a person becomes immortal and treads the path that is loved by Indra and Pusha.

Such a person is blessed with divine qualities. He is the one who deserves to be a leader of warriors among men. He is the one who becomes the destroyer of the enemies and the protector of the kingdom. He becomes famous and is the beloved of the inhabitants of the kingdom.

The king should be a deserving person so that he is as revered as a handsome sacrificial horse. He should be the beloved of the gods. Thrice a year, the leaders of the kingdom take the king on a tour of the kingdom. (This was a ritual which enabled the king to get acquainted with the kingdom.) The gods are the ones

who protect and sustain. They remain in the forefront and protect the kingdom.

○ officiating priests! Make the offerings and offer *dakshina* (the sacrificial fee) to the *brahmanas*. May the rivers overflow and may the learned be satisfied.

A person has laboured to make the sacrificial scaffolding. A person has laboured to bring it here and another person has laboured to make the bridle for the sacrificial horse. Some other person has laboured to collect the wood. May all this labour ensure our welfare.

The king brings welfare to his subjects, he is the one who can grant protection. He is the refuge of the learned. The sages are pleased when they are close to the king. May the king bring prosperity to his subjects and victory to his warriors.

The sacrificial horse has a bridle; its neck, legs and head are tied with ropes. In its mouth can be found grass and other fodder. May all these objects please the gods.

The mouth of the horse will bring us victory. Part of the horse remains attached to the weapon and part of it is in the hands of the person who wishes for peace. Part of the body is beyond the purview of the senses. Then part of it is offered to the kingdom. All of this is blessed by those who are learned.

(This is obscure. It probably refers to the actual act of the horse being sacrificed and the body being divided up.)

May peace be brought to the waste matter of the body. May only that food be cooked which is pure and sanctified.

O men! Part of the field has not been ploughed; it has been burnt by the fire of the sun. Let not that part of the field remain fallow. Let it not be swallowed up by weeds and grass. May those learned ones who want this land be given it, so that they can grow foodgrains on it.

The kingdom is like a field. There are those who wish to see the kingdom as full as a field on which foodgrains grow. The fields are irrigated with water from ponds and wells. The kingdom is full of resting-houses where travellers can rest from the heat of the sun. Thus it is that the kingdom flourishes.

May the smoke of Agni protect you from grief. May Usha and her energy protect you from disease. The king is handsome and the beloved of everyone. He is energetic and hard-working. May he be accepted as a leader by everyone.

The horse comes out, sits, moves here and there, moves backwards, drinks water, eats grass. May all these acts please those who are learned.

There are handsome clothes in which the horse is to be covered. There is gold with which it will be adorned. There are ropes to tie its head and feet. May these objects be preserved by those who are learned.

(These are references to the sacrificial horse.)

Your enemies are swift of foot. They will attack you from behind and catch you unawares. They will bring you harm. I will use my knowledge of the *Vedas* to protect you from such misery. I will cover all your faults.

(This and the subsequent hymn are addressed to the king.)

You are so strong that all by yourself you are capable of protecting the kingdom. You are the friend of the learned and you are the one who knows well the thirty-four parts of a horse's body. O best of men! Protect the kingdom through your efforts and make the kingdom prosper.

The seasons divide the year into various parts. There are two *ayanas* in a year, each consisting of six months. The sun is the ruler of time. I offer oblations in the various seasons.

When the *atman* (soul) leaves the body at the time of death, may you not grieve. May weapons which pierce you not overpower your body. May one who is undeserving not rule over you. May swords not chop up your body.

May you not be plagued by death and may you not know misery. May the path you tread be such that it takes you straight to the gods. O king! May the kingdom be like an excellent chariot which bears you on two handsome steeds. May one who is appointed as the prime minister of the kingdom be learned.

A strong king will bring us excellent horses and cows. There will be brave warriors in the kingdom and

we will have sons. The land will prosper. O king! Protect us from evil and sin. May he who rules over us be as strong as a horse. May the kingdom be blessed with prosperity and martial prowess.

This world will certainly be blessed with happiness. Indra and other gods, the twelve Adityas, and the forty-nine Maruts, will bring us the herbs that grant us welfare. The prosperous Indra and the Adityas will protect our sacrifices, our body and our sons. They will grant us the best of qualities.

O Agni! You are the one who is pure. You are the one in whom the Vasus find a refuge. You are the one who brings us riches in the form of the *ahavaniya* fire. Stay close to us and protect us. Bring us welfare. Grant us sons. Grant objects which bring us happiness. May the flames of our sacrificial fire rise upwards. May you blaze in glory. O handsome one! Light up our lives and bless us with the best of qualities. We are like your friends. We are praying to you so that you may grant us riches and prosperity.

This is the end of *Adhyaya* twenty-five. We now move on to *Adhyaya* thirty.

Adhyaya thirty

This chapter has twenty-two *mantras*, all of which need some explanation.

May the supreme godhead grant everyone the wisdom to perform righteous deeds and protect righteousness. May the supreme godhead purify us

and purify our learning. May our speech become sweet and may we tread superior paths.

(Men who desire to elevate themselves require four qualities. These are (i) the inspiration to perform righteous deeds; (ii) the desire to protect righteousness; (iii) purity of learning; (iv) sweetness of speech.)

We meditate on the energy of the supreme godhead. It is this energy that inspires our intelligence.

(The supreme godhead is the receptacle of all good qualities. These are the qualities of strength, power, energy, bliss and purification. When one meditates on the supreme godhead, it is on these qualities that one meditates. One meditates on infinite strength, infinite power, infinite energy, infinite bliss and infinite purification and is accordingly blessed with these qualities. Such a form of meditation (*upasana*) is known as *saguna upasana*.)

O supreme godhead! You are the creator. Keep all evil away from us and keep us close to all that is good.

(The specific evils that are intended are evil thoughts, evil habits, evil acts and evil companionship. If these are avoided, and good thoughts, good habits, good acts and good companionship cultivated, man is purified and elevated.)

There exists one who has divided righteous action into various forms. This has been done for the sake of

prosperity. There exists one who has advised all men and inspired them to righteous action. He is the one who deserves all praise.

(The word prosperity should not be interpreted in a narrow sense. Prosperity or riches mean different things to different people. For *brahmanas*, prosperity is in learning and knowledge. For *kshatriyas*, prosperity connotes valour and kingdoms. For *vaishyas*, prosperity lies in trade and money. And for *shudras*, prosperity means artisanship and physical labour. Accordingly, each class has certain specified tasks that connote righteous action. Righteous action means studying and teaching for *brahmanas*; for *kshatriyas* it means fighting and protecting others. For *vaishyas* its connotations are accumulation and donation of wealth, and for *shudras* they are manufacture of artefacts and spreading the skills of artisanship. It is in this sense that righteous action has been divided into various forms.)

One who associates with the learned for the sake of learning is a *brahmana*. One who is known for his valour is a king. One who is appointed for the sake of men is a *vaishya*. The *shudra* is for acts that require physical effort. May each stick to his appointed task so that ignorance is banished. To preserve the soldiers may there be warriors who can vanquish enemies. Be impotent in the case of evil. Take special care in buying and selling. Attain proximity to the one who has control over wishes. Appoint the one who can substantiate his speech with evidence.

(This seems to be very confusing, because advice to different classes are mixed up in the same *mantra*. That *brahmanas* should associate with the learned is clear enough. Moreover, one resorts to *brahmanas* for the sake of one's learning. The word *kshatra* means kingdom as well as valour. Thus, a *kshatriya* can be a king as well as one who is valourous. One resorts to the king or to *kshatriyas* for protection. The *vaishyas* trade in articles and set up shops and men require these articles and shops for their everyday living. It is for this reason that the *vaishya* is appointed for the sake of men. Physical tasks are set aside for the *shudra*. Each must stick to his appointed task, otherwise there will be chaos. Evil thoughts and evil deeds tempt men. If one is impotent, one does not act and so does not fall prey to such temptation. One is accordingly preserved from evil. The admonishment to take special care in buying and selling is meant for *vaishyas*. Alternatively, the sense is that, to take care of buying and selling, *vaishyas* must be employed. One who has a lot of will-power can influence other people and thus have control over wishes. Such people should be associated with; for, they can spur other men to good action. There were a class of people known as *magadhas*. They eventually became bards and minstrels, but the word *magadha* also means one who can substantiate the points made in his speech with appropriate evidence. It is thus suggested that a *magadha* be employed for important speeches.)

Let dancers be employed for the purpose of dancing. Let those who play on cymbals be employed for the purpose of singing. May righteous advisers be

appointed for assemblies. Let one who is powerful be employed for the soul of the nation. One who is strong must be employed for martial games. An artisan must be employed for brightening up the kingdom. Befriend women for the sake of happiness. If you have a strong enemy, appoint the brave son of a brave woman. For the sake of strength, appoint charioteers and those who look after chariots. Appoint architects for the sake of patience.

(Some of the sentences are clear enough, but others require explanation. There were assemblies known as *sabhas*. These were *dharma sabhas*, as they indicated the canons of righteousness (*dharma*) that should be followed in ruling over the kingdom. Proper advisers or members of these assemblies should be appointed. The soul of the nation lies in the kingdom's strength, energy and truthfulness, and a powerful ruler preserves these traits. The suggestion is not that one should befriend all women indiscriminately. The woman in question is one's wife. What have architects got to do with patience? Architects build houses and if a house has been built well, it instils patience in the mind of one who lives in it. That is the reason why a good architect must be employed.)

A man who meditates must be employed because he brings glory to his lineage. For the sake of the kingdom, skilled artisans must be employed. For the beauty of one's own body, jewellers must be employed. And the beauty of one's body is also enhanced by employing barbers. If you wish to create a cloud of arrows in battle, employ those who make

arrows. If you wish to possess weapons, employ those who make bows and other weapons. For the sake of battle, employ those who make the strings of bows. If you wish your orders to be followed, do not employ one who deviates from his path. Employ one who can kill the deer. Employ as executioner someone whose voice thunders.

(Most of this passage is clear, but a few words need to be said about meditation (*tapas*). Meditation should not be construed as praying. For a *brahmana*, meditation means praying and studying. But for a *kshatriya*, meditation means protecting the kingdom. For a *vaishya*, meditation consists of agriculture, trade and animal husbandry. And for a *shudra*, meditation connotes artisanship and working as servants.)

Let ordinary men populate the banks of the rivers. But let hunters live in the forests so that they can take care of wild animals. Employ those who are like tigers in spirit. Appoint teachers who will travel around and instruct farmers and workers. For each task, only a person who is not evil must be appointed. The learned must be employed as instructors for those who live in the forests and also for ordinary subjects. To ensure one's own elevation, one must employ those who are wise and learned. Such individuals must not be frauds. Appoint those who can create a division in the ranks of the ghosts. Employ soldiers with weapons to take care of robbers and dacoits.

(We have used the word ghost as a translation for *pishacha* in the text. *Pishacha* literally means "one who lives on flesh and blood" and could therefore also

refer to cannibalistic races. The division in their ranks leads to their fighting amongst themselves. The word used for robbers and dacoits is *yatudhana*. These were robbers, dacoits and bandits, particularly those who waylaid travellers.)

For advice resort to the aged, as they have the wisdom of experience. For protecting the house, sentries must be employed. In times of unhappiness, resort to the advice of those who are learned. The learned will preserve you from decline. Employ those who are skilled for performing tasks that are difficult to accomplish. To improve one's appearance, employ those who are well-versed in the art of beautification. Those who perform their tasks with love and kind words should be employed; for they bring wisdom. But if a specific task needs to be done immediately, employ whoever is best from those who are at hand. Time should not be lost in looking for someone who is better. Each person who is employed should be given a task that is characteristic of his class. One who helps should be employed, as he provides succor in hours of stress.

(It is worth pointing out that the words that are used in the context of employing the learned are *parivitti*, *parivividana* and *edidhishu*. In the above passage, we have used these three words as signifying "those who are learned". Technically, all three words mean "someone who ensures one's own welfare before that of others". In the context of marriages, these three words have an additional significance. The words *parivitti* and *parivividana* are used for

younger brothers who get married before their elder brothers are married. And the word *edidhishu* is used for a younger sister who gets married before her elder sister is married.)

For destroying your enemies, employ a soldier who wields a scimitar. For the sake of happiness, employ one whose mind is pure. One who likes to labour should be employed as a guard at the main gate. Mental peace comes if one controls one's senses. Close your ears to the temptations of sin. Resort to physicians for the sake of a pure body. If you desire special knowledge, resort to an astrologer. For someone who wishes to learn, always employ a person who will ask questions. If you need to practise what you have learned, you still need an instructor who will ask questions. For the sake of fairness, employ a proper judge.

(On two occasions, references are made to a person who asks questions. The first word that is used is *prashnim* and this word also means complainant. The second word that is used is *abhiprashnim* and this word also means defendant. This is followed by a reference to a judge (*prashnavivakam*), but it becomes difficult to interpret the sentences in the sense of a litigation.)

To ensure speed, employ those who can ride on elephants. Also employ those who can ride on horses and look after them. Cowherds should be employed as the yield of cows will bring you sustenance. Also employ those who tend sheep, as the milk of sheep brings development to the body. Goatherds must be employed, as the milk of goats makes the body

energetic. Employ farmers so that foodgrains may be obtained. To obtain wine, employ those who make wine. Guards must be employed for the welfare of the household. For the sake of your welfare, employ those who bear riches and increase them. A person who keeps an eye on other employees must be employed.

(The reference to wine must be elaborated on. The word that is used is *kilala*. *Kilala* does mean wine, but it also means a heavenly drink. For instance, the word *kilala* is used for one part of salt mixed with a hundred parts of pure water. It is also used for coconut-milk. Thus the sentence need not necessarily be interpreted as a reference to wine. The word that is used for a maker of wine is *surakara*. But this could also signify someone who makes water purified. And *surakara* does also mean a coconut tree. A person who increases riches is a money-lender.)

To obtain light, employ a bringer of firewood. Employ those who can light fires for brightness. Employ one who will bathe you to protect you from the heat. For the sake of happiness, employ one who will remove your impediments. To attain the abode of the gods, employ someone who will beautify you. Employ those who will bring welfare to mankind. Employ those who will bring welfare to the universe. Employ those who will kill your enemies and bring such distress to them that they do not dare to attack you again. Employ a washerman so that your clothes may be pure and clean. For your beautification, employ those who are skilled in the use of colour.

(Those who are skilled in the use of colour will colour one's clothes, or other objects.)

To deal with your enemies, employ a person who has the heart of a thief. Employ one who will bring a division to the ranks of the enemies. He will destroy the enemies. Employ spies to find out what is happening. Men who obey orders, that is, are obedient by nature, must be employed as soldiers. A travelling employee must be there to earmark different plots of land and mark out villages and cities. If you wish that there should be love, employ those who are sweet of speech. For the sake of protection, have a cavalry. As advisers and ministers to the king, employ those who make the kingdom as lofty as heaven. For the sake of happiness, employ those who remove all impediments.

(Why should a person with the heart of a thief be employed to deal with one's enemies? A thief hides his thoughts, he does not come out into the open. It is this trait of treachery that must be used in dealing with one's enemies.)

If you wish to be strong, employ those who will smelt iron for you. To keep your anger in check, employ those who will give alms on your behalf. To learn the techniques of *yoga*, employ teachers of *yoga*. May your body be energised with the energy of gold. May those whom you employ bring you peace and protection. Employ those who know the techniques of rising and falling water. Employ those who will make your body strong. For a good body, employ those who will take care of your eyes. For times of emergency,

employ a treasurer for the kingdom. Be impartial to ensure that fairness prevails.

(*Yoga* literally means union. It is a technique of meditation that seeks to bring about an union between the human soul (*atman*) and divine soul (*paramatman*). There are eight components of *yoga*. The first four are named *yama*, *niyama*, *asana* and *pranayama*. These try to bring about physical upliftment. The other four are named *pratyahara*, *dhyana*, *dharana* and *samadhi*. These seek to bring about spiritual upliftment. There are places where the water rises or ascends and there are other places where the water falls or descends. There are still other places where water neither rises nor falls, but maintains a stable level. The neighbourhood of the water must be populated by those who know how to handle these three types of water.)

To follow proper rules, employ those who know these rules. In the case of a practitioner of *yoga* who has attained the supreme state of meditation (*samadhi*), employ people to take care of him. For the first year, a woman who is youthful must be in control. For the second year, a learned and middle-aged woman must be in control. For the third year, a woman who achieves superiority fast must be in control. For the fourth year, a white-haired old woman must be in control. For the fifth year, an extremely learned woman must be in control. For each span of five years, an old woman must have the control. Those who deal with chariots must have the help of those who work with leather. Those who make

wooden chairs must also have the help of those who work with leather.

(The part about the women is not very clear. But the general idea is that a woman must be appointed to supervise other women. The nature of the woman in control must not remain constant over time, but should be rotated and varied from year to year. If that is done, no particular group of women can have a grievance.)

Employ fishermen to take care of lakes and ponds. Those who are employed to look after copses need not be the best of men. People must be employed to take care of small ponds. The water in these ponds must regularly be cleaned. People must be employed to make arrows. Those who know how to traverse rivers must be employed to help people cross. Those who can swim well must be employed near rivers and ponds to prevent others from drowning. In places where one can swim across the water, people must be employed to build dams. In places which go uphill and downhill, those who know the paths must be employed to protect others. Employ musicians to obtain a good voice. Employ hunters to live in caves. Employ mountain-dwellers to live on the peaks of mountains. But in other places in the mountains, ordinary people can reside.

For cruel acts, forest-dwellers must be employed. To obtain splendour, employ jewellers who work with gold. Employ tradesmen and shopkeepers to measure weights. A person who is always at the back must be specially hard-working. One who pursues the truth

must be employed to take care of the learned. Be skilled so that you may attain superiority. If one is lazy, downfall is certain. At times of danger or at times of destruction, employ someone who can think of the welfare of the human race. Be humble to attain superiority. As executioner, employ someone who can behead efficiently.

(A person who is always at the back of every action suffers from the sin of never being in the front. He must therefore be specially hard-working so as to overcome this sin.)

The chief employee of the kingdom must be a person who is extremely learned. To ensure the success of your action, employ someone who will always find fault with your action. Employ one who is imaginative so that he can think of good deeds for you. Employ one who will enable you to overcome your laziness. Before embarking on a war, obtain the consent of one who is influential in the assembly. Punish with death those who oppress cows or kill them.

(Before embarking on a war, the king has to obtain the permission of the assembly (*sabha*). This becomes easy if someone who is influential in the assembly has sanctioned the war.)

Punish with hunger those who maim cows and those who are beggars. Those who are evil must be taught so that they return to the righteous path. And there must be soldiers with weapons to take care of those who sin.

One who is impartial must be employed to adjudicate promises and vows. If a speech requires a loud volume, employ one whose voice is strong. If a debate is to be concluded, employ a good orator. If a debate is unlikely to be concluded, employ those who talk less. If you require noise, employ those who play on drums. For the sake of glory, employ those who play on the *veena* (a musical instrument). If you want a loud noise, employ those who play on drums. But if you want a medium noise, employ those who play on conch-shells. Employ foresters to take care of the forests. For larger forests, employ fire-fighters to protect the forests.

For martial games, employ those who are strong. Employ artisans to make the kingdom shine. If the kingdom is to be strong, employ leaders in the villages. Employ those who can count the riches of the kingdom. Employ those who can make announcements for the people. For the sake of dancing, employ those who can play on the *veena*. Employ those who can play on cymbals and musical instruments made of leather (percussion instruments). For the sake of happiness, employ those who have some sense of music.

Employ strong men to work with fire. To work under the ground, employ those who can crawl. To work in places where the wind is strong, employ outcasts. If you need work to be done up in the air, employ those who can walk on stilts. If work is to be done in the sky, someone who knows the way of the sky must be employed. To deal with Surya, employ

ones whose eyes are green. To deal with the stars, employ one whose eyes are orange. To deal with the moon, employ one whose eyes are white. To work during the day, employ someone whose complexion is fair. His eyes must however be brown. And to work during the night, employ someone whose complexion is dark. His eyes must however be brown.

(It is difficult to make sense of the bit about the sun, the moon and the stars. This must have had something to do with astronomy. For example, if one uses green-tinted glasses to look at the sun, one's eyes are not damaged.)

There are eight types of men who are unbecoming of appearance. These are men who are too tall, too short, too fat, too thin, too fair, too dark, those who have no hair and those who have too much of hair. These eight types of men and four additional types can be retained by the king. The four additional types are those who sing the king's praise (*magadha*), eunuchs (*pumshchali*), those who play with dice (*kitava*), and those who are impotent (*kliba*). These twelve types of men are not *brahmanas*, nor are they *shudras*.

This is the end of *Adhyaya* thirty. We now move on to *Adhyaya* thirty-six. The reason for choosing chapter thirty-six, rather than chapter thirty-five, is that chapter thirty-six contains many *mantras* which are commonly recited.

Adhyaya Thirty-six

There are twenty-four *mantras* in this chapter.

Through my speech I seek refuge in the *Rig Veda*.
Through my mind I seek refuge in the *Yajur Veda*.
Through my breath of life I seek refuge in the *Sama Veda*.
Through my senses I seek refuge in the *Atharva Veda*.
May the strength of speech, the strength of unity, and the strength of life be constant in my body.

My eyes, my heart and my mind may have holes in them. Any such faults that I have will be rectified by the lord of all learning. The lord of all creation will bring welfare to all of us.

The supreme godhead is the creator of the universe. He has the same form in all three worlds. He is the source of infinite happiness. We meditate on the energy of this supreme godhead. It is he who will specially inspire our intelligence.

(Since this *mantra* is recited quite often, it is worth reproducing the Sanskrit. That goes as follows.

bhu bhuvah svah tat savituh varenyam bhargah devasya dhimahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat.)

The great and wonderful godhead befriends all of us through his protection, through his great power and through the constant evolution of action. All of this ensures our welfare.

O supreme godhead! You bring more happiness than the happiness that comes from savouring food and other material objects. You are constant in the

three periods of time (the past, the present and the future). Who can please you? You can blow to bits the strong earth and all its objects. O men! The supreme godhead, who is the source of all happiness, is constant in the three periods of time and brings you happiness through food and other pleasures. He grants you many riches to free you from misery.

O god! You are our benefactor. You are our protector. You take care of your devotees through all manner of protection.

O god! You shower down happiness on us. You are the source of happiness and you make us happy in all the directions through your protection. You sustain through your happiness all those who praise you.

The supreme godhead has an abundance of riches and is the lord of everyone. He brings welfare to bipeds and to quadrupeds.

May he who is everyone's friend (Mitra) bring us welfare. May he who is the greatest (Varuna) bring us welfare. May he who is fair (Aryama) bring us welfare. May he who is prosperous (Indra) bring us welfare. May he who is the lord of speech (Brihaspati) bring us welfare. May he who is everywhere and is the performer of great deeds (Vishnu) bring us welfare.

May the wind (Vayu) blow so that it brings everyone welfare. May the sun (Surya) radiate heat so that it brings everyone welfare. May the rain (Parjanya) thunder and shower so that it brings everyone welfare.

May the day bring all of us welfare. May the night bring all of us welfare. May he who is prosperous and energetic grant all of us protection and welfare. May he who is prosperous and supreme grant all of us foodgrains and welfare. May the prosperous one who sustains us bring us welfare when he grants us foodgrains. May the prosperous one who is learned grant us welfare. May he protect us from disease and fear. May our welfare be ensured.

The divine water will fulfil our wishes and slake our thirst. It will bring us welfare. It will flow so that disease is banished and so that we are freed from all harm.

O earth! May you be such that you bring us happiness. May we never have to suffer. Grant us excellent places to dwell in. Increase your expanse so that all of us can attain happiness.

Water is certainly the source of happiness. The water nourishes our strength, foodgrains and intelligence. May water enable us to know the nature of divine sound and divine sight.

On this earth, water is the source of all juices that bring happiness. May we obtain these juices. O earth! Give us these juices the way a mother gives her son milk.

Water is the source of all juices. May we obtain these juices by obtaining the completeness that is in water. O water! Show us the path by which we can attain superiority.

May heaven give rise to peace. May the atmosphere give rise to peace. May the earth give rise to peace. May the water give rise to peace. May the herbs give rise to peace. May the trees give rise to peace. May the learned ones (*Vishvadevas*) give rise to peace. May the knowledge of the *brahman* give rise to peace. May peace prevail in the entire universe. May peace itself give rise to true peace. May I attain the peace that is indeed true.

(This an oft-recited *mantra* and so it is worthwhile reproducing the original Sanskrit. This runs as follows.

*dyouh shantih antariksham shantih prithivi shantih
apah shantih oshadhayah shantih vanáspatayah shantih
vishve devah shantih brahma shantih sarvam shantih
shanti eva shantih sa ma shantiredhi.)*

O *brahman*! Make me strong. May all living beings look upon me as a friend. May I look upon all living beings as friends. May we look upon each other as friends.

O powerful one! Make me strong. If I get to see you, I will live for a long time. If I get to meet you, I will live for a long time.

I pray to the one who removes all evil. I pray to the one who increases purity. I pray to the one whose energy radiates out. I bow in obeisance before you. May your weapons leave me unharmed; may they instead be diverted towards others. The supreme godhead who purifies everything will bring all of us welfare.

I pray to the one in whose form there is special energy. I pray to the one in whose form there is a thunderous roar. O prosperous one! I pray to thee. You are the one who is the source of all happiness.

In every place where you perform your action, may you free us from fear. Bring our subjects welfare and free them from fear. Make our animals free from fear.

(We will reproduce the original Sanskrit for this as well, and it is as follows.

yatah yatah sam ihase tatah nah abhayam kuru sham nah kuru prajabhyah abhayam nah pashubhyah.)

The water and the herbs will bring welfare to all of us. But they will bring misery to the one who bears hatred towards us in his heart. They will also bring misery to the one whom we hate in our hearts.

The pure learning that brings welfare to the learned has been known for some time. It will help the learned to live for a hundred years. They will hear for a hundred years and talk for a hundred years. For a hundred years, they will not live in penury, but will be blessed with happiness.

This is the end of *Adhyaya* thirty-six. We will now move on to the last chapter of the *Yajur Veda*. This is *Adhyaya* forty. *Adhyaya* forty is in fact rather special. It is actually an *Upanishad*, the *Ishopanishad*. This is the only instance where an *Upanishad* forms a part of the *samhita* section of a *Veda*.

Adhyaya Forty, the Ishopanishad

There are seventeen *mantras* in this chapter. The supreme godhead is the origin of this universe where one can dwell. The universe evolves and changes, but it continues to be the same constant universe. Enjoy the universe by donating its riches. Do not be greedy. Do the riches of the universe belong to any single individual?

This world is the place to perform great acts (*karma*). It is action that enables one to live for a hundred years. May you realise this knowledge. There is no other course of action. Performing deeds never sullies the human race.

Those who are famous for their physical strength and strive only for that, are shrouded in the darkness of ignorance. Those who kill themselves join the ranks of these ignorant ones after they die.

(Killing oneself does not mean killing oneself in a literal sense. There are ten ways to kill oneself. These are : (i) negating that the supreme godhead is everywhere ; (ii) harming the populace in general to further one's own desires; (iii) being selfish in the pursuit of pleasure; (iv) being greedy; (v) desiring all the wealth for one's own self; (vi) performing evil acts; (vii) performing acts that reduce one's life expectancy; (viii) not maintaining the concentration of the mind; (ix) believing in a path that is not the righteous one; and (x) believing that righteous deeds act as bonds. Anyone who does any of these, kills himself by failing to elevate himself spiritually. Thus, the death referred

to above does not refer to the literal act of dying. People who are evil in the above senses are spiritually dead even though they may be physically alive.)

The supreme godhead is one. It is constant and does not move. It is ancient and was there before the universe was created. The supreme godhead is the source of all inspiration; it is swifter than the speed of thought. The senses are incapable of getting to know the *paramatman*. Although the godhead is constant and immobile, it is faster than any object that one can think of. An individual who is in his mother's womb has given up his earlier physical body and is awaiting a new one. It is the supreme godhead which guides him along the path to future action and it is the *paramatman* which keeps a tally of all the action that he performs.

The *paramatman* makes others move, but it does not move itself. The *paramatman* is far away, and yet it is certainly very near. The *paramatman* is in everything, but it is also outside everything.

He who is truly learned visualises the *paramatman* in every object. He realises that the *paramatman* is inside and outside every element. The truly learned never doubt this truth.

One who attains this special knowledge realises that it is his *atman* that is there in every object and in every element. How can one who understands this unification suffer from any form of illusion? How can he ever be unhappy?

The *paramatman* is everywhere. It has no body, nor does it have any senses. It has no hue. The *paramatman* is pure and energetic, untouched by sin. It sees everything and it knows everything. The *paramatman* is victorious; it has created itself. From time immemorial, the *paramatman* has preordained the destiny of all objects according to prescribed paths.

One can strive for the unity of a nation or one can strive for the independence of its individual entities. One who strives for individual independence is shrouded in the darkness of ignorance. One who strives for the independence of individual entities is also ignorant. One who strives only for the unity of a nation is also ignorant. But the ignorance of the one who strives for individual independence is greater.

(There must therefore be a proper balance between individual independence and the unity of the nation. Too much of emphasis on unification stifles individual initiative. And too much of emphasis on individual independence leads to selfishness.)

There is some good in striving for the unity of the nation and there is also some good in striving for individual independence. These are two distinct paths. Those who choose that which is good from each of these two paths and attain a balance are the truly learned.

Learned indeed is the one who knows the good of each of these two paths. He attains immortality.

He who does not know the nature of the *atman* is shrouded in the darkness of ignorance. But he who knows only the *atman* and ignores the world at large, is also shrouded in the darkness of ignorance. In fact, the ignorance of the latter is greater.

The fruits of pursuing spiritual knowledge are different from the fruits of pursuing material knowledge. That is the instruction we have received from those who are learned.

(Spiritual knowledge is attained by those who strive to understand the nature of the *atman*. Material knowledge is attained by those who are obsessed with the world and material possessions. The learned have instructed us that pursuing either path in an extreme fashion has its dangers. Someone who concentrates exclusively on the material world does not attain spiritual upliftment. And someone who concentrates only on the *atman* and ignores the material world, liable to spurn all action. The path indicated by the learned is a proper mixture of the two.)

The person who has a knowledge of the *atman* and a knowledge of the world is indeed learned. Through his knowledge of the world, he banishes death. Through his knowledge of the *atman*, he attains immortality.

The force of life is divine and immortal. The physical body will eventually be burnt to ashes. O men! You are the ones who perform action. Meditate on the *atman* for your protection. Think of the deeds that you have performed. O men! You are the ones

who perform action Think. Think of the deeds that you have performed.

O Agni! You are the one who lights everything up. Show us the path along which we can elevate ourselves. O gods! You are familiar with the acts we have performed. Please remove the sin resulting from any evil acts that we may have committed. We bow down in obeisance before you and chant your praise.

The happiness that is in truth is covered inside a golden vessel. It is true that I am the one who is present in all life. It is true that heaven is nothing but the *brahman*.

(The pursuit of gold leads to distraction. Gold is a symbol for the illusions of the material world. Unless one sets aside this distraction, one will not attain the light of true knowledge. I am the one who is present in all life since I am trying to obtain the knowledge of the *brahman* through all living beings. The *brahman* pervades the universe and heaven is identical with the *brahman*.)

This truth is universal. That (the *brahman*) is complete. This (the world) is also complete (as it was created by the *brahman*). It is known that anything created by the complete is also complete. If the complete (the world) is taken away from the complete (the *brahman*), what remains is also complete.

(The creation of the world did not, in any way, impair the completeness of the *brahman*. This *mantra* is also cited quite often. Therefore, let us reproduce the Sanskrit.

om purnamadah purnamidam purnatpurn-
amudachyate purnasya purnamadaya purnameva-
vashishyate.)

O protector! May there be peace. May there be peace. May there be peace.

(*Om! Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!* The first invocation of peace refers to individual peace, the second to social peace and the third to worldly peace.)

This concludes the *Yajur Veda Samhita*. As you have realised, we have not reproduced the text in its entirety. That would have been impossible in so short a space. We have skipped many chapters. Wouldn't you like to savour what the other chapters have to offer? You will also have realised that there is scope for varied interpretation in translating the text. The text of the *Yajur Veda* is not as straightforward as is the case with, say, the text of the *Sama Veda*. Wouldn't you like to check whether our interpretations are correct?

What better way is there to do this than to read the original *Yajur Veda* for yourself?

The Sama Veda

The Sama Veda Samhita

The *Sama Veda Samhita* is composed entirely in metrical form. It is about half as long as the *Rig Veda Samhita* and also borrows considerably from the *Rig Veda Samhita*. This shows that the *Sama Veda* was composed after the *Rig Veda*. The word *sama* means sweet songs or hymns. Since the *Sama Veda* consists of such hymns, it is known as the *Sama Veda*. Perhaps a point needs to be mentioned about these *sama* hymns. These hymns were sung so that the initial pitch or volume was high and was gradually reduced. Since the pitch never fluctuated between a high and a low, the listener's mind was gradually lulled and drawn towards an inner peace. *Sama* hymns were not pure incantations (*mantras*), nor were they pure songs. They were a mixture of the two.

It is sometimes held that the *Sama Veda* originally had one thousand different branches (*shakha*). Scholars do not believe this to have been seriously possible and there are records of only thirteen branches of the *Sama Veda*. These are as follows:

- (i) *Ranayana*
- (ii) *Shatyamukhya*
- (iii) *Vyasa*
- (iv) *Bhaguri*
- (v) *Oulundi*
- (vi) *Goulgulvi*
- (vii) *Bhanuman-Oupamanyava*
- (viii) *Karati*
- (ix) *Mashaka Gargya*
- (x) *Varshagavya*
- (xi) *Kuthuma*
- (xii) *Shalihotra*
- (xiii) *Jaimini*

Of these, only three branches are now available. The others have been lost. The three branches that continue to be available are *Ranayana*, *Kuthuma* and *Jaimini*. What circulates by the name of the *Sama Veda* today is based on these three branches. The *Sama Veda* that is now there accordingly consists of 1875 *mantras*. On these, around 4000 *sama* hymns are based.

The *mantras* are divided into two broad groups or parts. The first is known as *purvarchika* and consists of 650 *mantras*. The remaining 1225 *mantras* are in the

subsequent or second part, known as *uttararchika*. The *purvarchika* is divided into four sections (*kandas*) - *agneya kanda*, *aindra kanda*, *pavamana kanda* and *aranya kanda*. Each of the *kandas* is subdivided into chapters (*adhyaya*). The *uttararchika* does not have *kandas*, but is simply divided into twenty-one chapters.

The *brahmanas* which are identified with the *Sama Veda Samhita* are the following:

- (i) *Tandya Brahmana*, also known as *Proudra Brahmana* or *Panchavimsha Brahmana*
- (ii) *Shadavimsha Brahmana*
- (iii) *Samavidhana Brahmana*
- (iv) *Arsheya Brahmana*
- (v) *Devatadhyaya Brahmana*
- (vi) *Upanishad Brahmana*, also known as *Mantra Brahmana*
- (vii) *Vamsha Brahmana*.

The gods of the Vedas

The *Vedas* cannot really be appreciated without some sort of an understanding of the gods mentioned in the *Vedas*. The gods of the *Vedas* were different in nature and character from the gods that one encounters in the epics or in the sacred texts known as the *Puranas*.

The three major gods of the *Vedas* were Agni, Indra or Vayu and Surya. Agni ruled over the earth (*prithivi*), Indra or Vayu ruled over the atmosphere (*antariksha*)

and Surya ruled over heaven (*dyuloka*). All other gods were regarded as manifestations of these three gods. For example, all gods on earth were identified with Agni, all gods in the atmosphere were identified with Indra or Vayu, and all gods in heaven were identified with Surya. This at least was the version given by Yaska, a commentator on the *Vedas* who lived around 800 B.C. There were two other points of view as well. One held that all the various gods were manifestations of the same unified supreme godhead. This monotheistic point of view can be particularly found in the *Upanishads*. An alternative point of view subscribed to polytheism and held that the various gods could not be identified, they were distinct.

Even within the *Vedas*, the number of gods varies from place to place. In some places, there are only three gods, one ruling over the earth, the second over the atmosphere and the third over heaven. The earth, the atmosphere and heaven were known as *lokas* (regions), there being three *lokas*. In some places, the *Vedas* state that there were 11 gods for each *loka*, so that there were 33 gods in all. In some cases, there are references to 3339 gods. When it came to the age of the *Puranas*, the number of gods increased to thirty-three crores.

Many scholars have suggested that the gods of the *Vedas* are nature gods. That is, forces of nature came to be ascribed with divine qualities and became gods. To some extent, this is indeed true. But the forces of nature have been so humanised that their original elemental form is sometimes impossible to detect. This

is known as anthropomorphism. Besides, there are also abstract deities with whom no forces of nature can be readily identified.

It is also important to realise that the gods of the *Vedas* cannot easily be compartmentalised into pantheons of monotheism or polytheism. What is more commonly found is what goes by the name of kathenotheism. That is, there is more than one god. But whenever a hymn is addressed to a particular god, that god comes to be ascribed with all the divine qualities. In the course of the hymn, the god in question is regarded as the supreme godhead and all the other gods come to be regarded as his manifestations.

The gods of the *Vedas* can now be catalogued under three different headings - gods of heaven (*dyuloka*), gods of the atmosphere (*antariksha*) and gods of the earth (*prithivi*).

The chief gods of heaven are Dyouspita, Mitra/Varuna, Surya/Savita/Pusha, Vishnu, the two Ashvinis, Usha and Chandrama. Dyouspita is regarded as the father of the universe, *prithivi* being regarded as the mother. Dyouspita and the earth are together addressed as Dyavaprihivi. Dyouspita seems to have been a personification of the sky. The gods Mitra and Varuna are almost invariably addressed in unison. Mitra seems to have been identified with the day and Varuna with the night. Mitra is also identified with Surya. In the period of the epics and the *Puranas*, Varuna came to be regarded as the lord of the oceans. But this was not the case at the time of

the *Vedas*. Surya is the sun-god and Savita is a manifestation of Surya at specific points of time. Pusha is also a manifestation of Surya. Vishnu is a minor god in the *Vedas* and there are indications that Vishnu was also regarded as a manifestation of Surya. The two Ashvinis are physicians of the gods, they share a common wife named Usha (the dawn). In the *Vedas*, the Ashvinis are closely associated with Surya. They may very well have been stars (*nakshatra*) identified with the morning and the evening. Another name for the two Ashvinis is Nasatya. Usha is the goddess of the dawn. She is also addressed as *Dakshina* (sacrificial fee). It was at the time of dawn that priests began sacrifices and received their fees. Chandrama is a minor god, the moon-god. He is closely identified with the god Soma.

The chief gods of the atmosphere are Indra, Aja Ekapada, Matarishvan/Vayu/Vata, Parjanya, Rudra and the Maruts. Indra is the most powerful of all the gods. He killed the demon Vritra and is accordingly addressed as Vritraha. Purandara is another of his names. Aja Ekapada is a minor god and is probably a manifestation of either Agni or Surya. Matarishvan, Vayu and Vata are all gods of the wind. Parjanya has a close relationship with them and is a personification of the clouds. Parjanya thus rules over herbs and rains. The Rudra of the *Vedas* is not the Rudra of the *Puranas*. In the *Vedas*, Rudra is a god of the wind. Alternatively, he is identified with Agni. The Maruts are also wind-gods and are regarded as the offspring of Rudra. The number of the Maruts is not unambiguously given. In some places, the number

seems to be 180. In other places, there seem to be 21 Maruts. The Maruts are close companions of Indra.

The chief gods of the earth are Agni, Brihaspati/Brahmanaspati, Soma and Sarasvati. Agni is the main god of the earth, he is the fire-god. There are three different types of fire - *ahavaniya*, *dakshinagni* and *garhapatya*. *Ahavaniya agni* is used to offer oblations to the gods, *dakshinagni* is used to make offerings to the ancestors and *garhapatya agni* is the fire that continually burns in any household. In the age of the *Vedas*, fire was ignited by rubbing two pieces of stick (*arani*) together. These are known as *uttarani* and *adhararani*. It is not entirely clear whether Brihaspati or Brahmanaspati is indeed a god. He seems to have been more like a chief priest, often regarded as the lord of all hymns. It was only in a later period that Brihaspati came to be identified with a *nakshatra*. Soma is really a herb, although he is also identified with Chandrama. In the *Vedas*, Sarasvati is not the goddess of learning. She is a river, also known as Bharati.

Let us now see what the hymns of the *Sama Veda Samhita* have to say.

We will start with the *Purvarchika* section.

The first part of *Purvarchika* is *Agneya Kanda*. As the name implies, this part (*kanda*) is predominantly concerned with hymns (*mantra*) to Agni. There are however a few other *mantras* addressed to gods like Indra, Brahmanaspati, Yupa, Pusha, Vishvadeva, Angira, Soma and Aditi.

There are a hundred and fourteen *mantras* in the *Agneya Kanda*. These are divided into twelve sections (*khanda*). The *mantras* follow five different metres. These are *gayatri*, *vrihati*, *trishtupa*, *anushtupa* and *ushnika*.

PURVARCHIKA

Agneya Kanda

O Agni! Come and receive the offerings we make at sacrifices. It is to you that one must pray before making offerings to the gods at sacrifices. Come and be the priest at the sacrifice (*yajna*), come and be seated on the altar of the sacrifice. O Agni!. You are the one who summons the gods to all sacrifices. It is the gods themselves who have established you among human beings. We acknowledge the fire-god as the messenger of all the gods. He is omniscient, he summons the gods, it is he who ensures that the sacrifice will be performed according to the prescribed rites

Agni is pleased by specific hymns. Agni grants wealth to devotees. He manifests himself in pure radiance when we call upon him. It is he who destroys the enemies who surround us from all sides. I pray to Agni with the love I display towards a beloved friend. I pray to Agni with the devotion I show to honoured guests. I pray to Agni with the respect I exhibit towards a chariot bearing riches.

O Agni! Protect me from my enemies. Protect me from men who are driven by hatred. Guide me along the path to salvation. O Agni! Come here. I call upon

you with the chanting of sacred hymns. I offer to you the juice of the *soma* herb. Thrive on it and attain greatness. O Agni! Your son calls upon you. Descend from your elevated seat and grace me. O Agni! I use these hymns to attain your blessings.

O Agni! The learned have described you as the fulcrum of the universe, the supreme among all elements. They have brought you into being through the rubbing together of sticks. O Agni! Grant me an appropriate home so that I may be well-protected. You are the god who shows us the right path.

O Agni! O God! Men pray to you for power. Use your power to destroy our enemies. Fire-god, you are the lord of all wealth. You are the one who receives all sacrificial offerings, you are the one who is the messenger of the gods. I will please Agni through my prayers and make him kindly disposed to all those who perform sacrifices. One who observes sacrifices loves your hymns as much as he loves his own sister. Your hymns express your divine qualities and mingle into the air.

O Agni! I pray to you every day, night and day. My prayers bring me closer to thee. Agni becomes known through prayers and hymns. He is there for the welfare of all men. He is there for the despair of the wicked. These beautiful hymns are sung to Agni. Fire-god, listen to our prayers.

O Agni! These are wonderful non-violent sacrifices. We are summoning you so that you may protect them. Come to us with the Maruts, the gods of the

wind. Agni, you are like a steed with a flowing tail. You are the one who will bless our non-violent sacrifices. We chant hymns to Agni. I pray to the sacred and pure fire that resides in the ocean. He who lights a fire with faith kindles his own devotion. It is the fire-god who is resplendent in the rays of the blazing sun. Agni manifests himself in heaven (*dyuloka*). But men can witness his power in the light of the day.

O supreme and all-powerful, O harbinger of prosperity! Protect our non-violent sacrifice. The fire-god demolishes our foes with his radiance. He grants us wealth. O Agni! You are indeed great. Come to us, those who pray to the gods. Seat yourself on the throne we have reserved for you and make us happy. O Agni! Let us not be harmed by enemies who are sinful and hateful. O fire-god! You who are ever-youthful, burn up all our enemies with your energy.

O Agni! You are the possessor of fleet-footed steeds. Harness them to your chariot and hasten here. It is with you that we seek sanctuary, it is you who protect and aid all men. Radiant and omnipotent lord, we pray to thee. The fire-god has the most supreme of places, he resides in the loftiest locations of heaven (*dyuloka*). Rule over earth and grant to all the fruits of their deeds.

O Agni! We are making offerings of grain that has just been reaped. We are chanting hymns composed in the *gayatri* metre. Please make sure that these are known to the gods. Sages in hermitages have sung your praises, and it is you who purified the great sage

Angira. Please listen to our prayers. You are the lord of all foodgrains, you are all-knowing, you are the one who receives offerings made at sacrifices. You are the one who grants jewels to those who give alms.

The fire-god manifests the sun to the entire universe. And the rays of the sun are like the knowledge of the sacred *Vedas*. Pray to Agni so that our non-violent and righteous sacrifices may be blessed, pray to Agni so that our ailments may disappear. May all the objects that we wish for be granted to us. May the water we drink be sanctified and bring us happiness. May the waters that bring peace flow on earth. O fire-god! Preserve the truth. Protect the cattle, protect the senses and grant us knowledge. It is for these that we pray to thee.

Praise be to Agni in every sacrifice and in every hymn. We pray to the fire-god with all the love that we display towards a beloved friend. O Agni! This first hymn is so that you may protect us. This second hymn is also so that you may protect us. Lord of foodgrains, this third hymn is also so that you may protect us. Preserver of life, this fourth hymn is also so that you may protect us.

O Agni! You manifest yourself in all the great fires. You manifest yourself in pure radiance. You make us young and wealthy and pure. I, the sage Bharadvaja, am praying to you. Manifest yourself for my sake. O Agni! You are loved by all those who perform righteous sacrifices, you are loved by the learned and the wealthy, you are loved by those who rule over their subjects. It is you who preserve the cattle.

O Agni! You are a learned god, you protect the subjects and cause havoc among the demons (*rakshasa*). You are the lord of households. You do not desert a household, but reside in it. You are the one who protects heaven (*dyuloka*).

You are the immortal god. The dawn brings forth wondrous riches. Grant these to those who give alms. Omniscient god, bring to us the gods who arise with the dawn. O Agni! You are the one who secures habitations for everyone. Amazing indeed are your powers, bring to us wonderful riches laden in your chariot, bring prosperity to our progeny.

O Agni! O protector! You are indeed famous. You are truth and knowledge. O powerful god. When your flames blaze, learned *brahmanas* (priests) worship you. Purify us. Grant us wealth. O learned god! Show us the right path. Grant us fame. It is you who bring happiness to men by summoning gods in their midst. It is to Agni that vessels full of the juice of the *soma* herb are offered. It is to Agni that hymns are chanted.

O Agni! Do not let the strength drain away from these foodgrains. I call upon the immortal god, I pray to him. Grant me knowledge. Men pray to you, whether they are in forests, on the ground, or in the wombs of their mothers. Those who are not lazy and those who make offerings at sacrifices, it is to them that you manifest all the gods. Let my prayers reach Agni so that he may grant me a long life. Let Agni show me that which is righteous.

It is Agni who must first be worshipped at all sacrifices. Our non-violent sacrifice has stones for the

crushing of the *soma* herb. It also has a seat for the immortal god. Come and ascend on your seat. Come with the gods of the wind, I am praying to you with the sacred hymns of the *Vedas*. Pray to the fire-god so that he may preserve you. Pray to the fire-god so that he may grant you wealth. Pray to the fire-god so that he may grant you a habitation.

O Agni! Listen to our prayers. Come and ascend your throne with the gods Mitra and Aryama. You are as powerful as the great Indra, you were prayed to by King Divodasa. You first condescended to manifest yourself on earth and then began to reside in heaven. O Agni! Thy energy increase on earth as it does in heaven. Ensure that my sacrifice is a success and protect my relations.

O Agni! Make the forests thrive. Do not forsake me and disappear into the water. I cannot bear to be parted from you. Even if you must go far away, leave a part of you with me. The learned among men keep you in their midst. From time immemorial your radiance has blessed the human race. Your flames have graced the hermitage of every learned sage. Burn brighter so that the sacrifice may be a success. We bow in obeisance before you.

The god will grant us wealth and prosperity. Let us pour ladles of clarified butter into the fire. The god will be pleased and will lead us along the path to salvation. Let Agni come to us. Let Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, come to us. Let all the gods come to our sacrifice and bless mankind. Let them lead the bravest amongst us along the highest paths. Great

fire-god, protect us from above. Become as lofty as Surya, the sun-god. Grant us foodgrains. That is the reason we are calling upon you.

Establish us. He who prays to you for prosperity, he who gives you offerings and he who chants hymns unto you, obtains the right to rule over a thousand men. He is blessed with brave sons. Those who light the flames of the fire-god attain divinity. The hymns we chant express the devotion of such devotees. Agni is the lord of bravery and wealth. He is the lord of progeny and cattle. He is the one who destroys your enemies.

O Agni! You are the lord of my household. Be the priest at my non-violent sacrifice. You are worshipped by everyone. You bring truth, you bring knowledge, you bring prosperity. O Agni! We call upon you. You will grant us wealth. You will make us perform good deeds. You will protect us from treading along the path of sin. We pray that you may descend among us.

I call upon all men to listen to me. Bring forth the sacrificial offerings. Be pure of heart. Establish the fire-god on the occasion of every sacrifice. When you offer oblations, welcome Agni with faith and devotion.

Agni is like a son born of two mothers. (That is, fire is generated by rubbing two sticks together.) But strange indeed is the fire-god's life. After being born, he does not suckle milk from either mother's breasts. He immediately begins to act as the messenger of the gods. Men have three different forms. The first form is

that of the fire. (That is, after cremation, the physical body merges into the fire.) The second form is that of the wind. (After death, one merges into the wind.) The third form is assimilated into the energy of the sun. (Once merged into this energy, the human soul attains the highest of places.)

The learned welcome Agni with these hymns. The hymns are like a sacrifice that bring forth the fire-god's chariot. Agni's presence preserves us from all harm. Agni is the crown of heaven, the lord of the earth, and the leader of the universe. He is born from the sacrifice, but was earlier created by the gods. He is omniscient and radiant. Agni should be worshipped like an honoured guest.

O Agni! Your presence can be felt in hymns and incantations. The priest of a sacrifice uses these to summon you. Flow like a stream coursing through the mountains. Like a valiant steed dashing into battle, become fleet-footed and powerful through our incantations. You are the king of our non-violent sacrifice. You are the priest of our sacrifice and golden is your hue. It is lightning that created Agni, but it is the clarified butter offered at sacrifices that make the fire-god stronger. Agni blazes in radiance even before the stroke of dawn.

The fire roars on earth. It was first born in the sky. It thrived in the water and in the clouds. A person observing a sacrifice rubs two pieces of stick (*arani*) between his hands. It is from this rubbing that Agni is born.

Agni is like a sacred cow, a gigantic tree. Agni preserves the intelligent and destroys the demons. Let the learned pray to the fire-god. Let Agni lead them towards prosperity, let him be their armour. Pray to the fire-god. His flames have a myriad hues.

O Pusha! (Pusha is the sun-god, another name for Surya. A hymn to Pusha is inserted amongst the hymns to Agni.) Your bright day is distinct from your dark night. It is your glory that gives rise to day and night. You grant us foodgrains and you make the day as bright as heaven. Protect your subjects and grant us boons.

O Agni! We incessantly perform sacrifices. Grant us progeny and grant us cattle. Make us successful. It is the fire in the household that is manifested as lightning in the sky. It is the same fire that blazes at a sacrifice. It is Agni who devours all sacrificial offerings. If you are a devotee, pray to Agni. He will grant you foodgrains and wealth, he will grant you health. Brave warriors pray to Agni. He is as powerful as Indra. Let us please the fire-god through our prayers.

Agni can be found in all forms of knowledge. It is he who protects the wombs of expectant mothers. And for him, the two *arani* sticks are like a womb. Agni should be worshipped by all men, every day. O Agni! Kill the enemies who cause us harm and unhappiness. The demons cannot vanquish you on the field of battle. Burn up all cannibal demons (*rakshasa*). Let no foe flee from your divine weapons.

O Agni! Grant us wealth, show us the path that leads to prosperity. Show us also the paths that lead to foodgrains and power. A person who gives birth to a brave son worships Agni and offers the fire-god oblations at a sacrifice. It is this which gives him divine bliss.

When Agni burns, the pure smoke whirls away into the sky. Agni is the purifier, he is as powerful as the sun. Agni establishes everyone, his eyes see all that there is to see. Humans make offerings to the fire-god. He is worshipped at the stroke of dawn. Hymns to Agni are the best of all hymns. O Agni! Grant us wealth and grant us foodgrains. If you wish for wealth and foodgrains, it is to the fire-god that you must pray. Pray to him with your hymns. He will reside in your house and grant you happiness.

Collect a lot of offerings for Agni. It is Agni who killed the demon Vritra. Agni is born from the sacrifice, he is the manifestation of righteousness. His father is the sage Kashyapa. His mother is Shraddha (faith). And it is the poet Manu who sings Agni's praise.

I call upon the gods Soma, Varuna, Agni, Aditya, Surya, Brahmanaspati, Vishnu and Brihaspati. I call upon them repeatedly. (This is again an interpolation amongst hymns to Agni.)

The great sages Angirasa trod along superior paths and ascended to heaven. They seated themselves in heaven. (This is yet another interpolation. In the *Vedas*, the Angirasa were a semi-divine species who were companions of Agni.)

O Agni! I light you so that I may obtain more and more of wealth. Pray to the heaven and to the earth so that Agni may be a priest at this sacrifice. Agni is like the axle of a wheel. Around him revolve all poetry and all action. O Agni! Rob the oppressive demons of their happiness. Destroy them from all the four directions, vanquish their valour. Great fire-god! Perform a sacrifice for Vasu, Rudra, Aditya and the other gods. We humans who are descended from the great Manu are praying unto you.

O Agni! I offer you oblations like a devoted servant. I seek refuge in you. Agni is the source of all wisdom. It is he who summons the gods and the supreme godhead to the sacrifice. Chant hymns to him. O fire-god! You are the lord of the foodgrains that are born from cattle. Grant us a lot of wealth.

O Agni! You are worshipped on the occasion of a sacrifice. Be the chief priest at the sacrifice and summon the gods here. Defeat our enemies and adorn our sacrifice. Let the fire-god bring us prosperity. Let him protect us on this day. Let him grant us peace and happiness. Let him banish our enemies. Pray to the destroyer of all foes, pray to him whose power knows no bounds. Pray to the great god whose smoke envelopes the four directions.

The performer of the sacrifice offers oblations to Agni. Fraudulent enemies and thieves are banished by the fire-god. He preserves truth and he shows us the righteous path. O Agni! You are valiant and preserve your subjects. Listen to my hymns and burn up the evil demons.

Those of you who wish to perform a sacrifice, make sure that you sing hymns to Agni. He will preserve your sacrifice, he will manifest himself in his greatness, and he will be the harbinger of truth. One who is befriended by Agni is freed from all misery. He is protected by the bravest of the brave.

If you wish to perform a sacrifice, pray to Agni. Your oblations will then be carried to heaven. The gods themselves worship Agni. It is he who will take the oblations to the gods. Let Agni be close to the sacrifice. The fire-god will preserve our well-being, he will grant us wealth and prosperity. He will make our sacrifice a success.

Agni is immortal. He is the chief among all the gods. We welcome Agni to the sacrifice. Please ensure, O fire-god, that those who eat too much do not pollute our sacrifice. Please banish hatred and evil from our sacrifice. When the flames rise high up into the sky, we will know that Agni is pleased. We will know that Agni will destroy the demons and bless our household.

(This concludes the *Agneya Kanda* of the *Sama Veda Samhita*.)

We will now move on to the *Aindra Kanda*. As the name implies, the *Aindra Kanda* is predominantly concerned with hymns (*mantra*) to Indra. There are however some *mantras* addressed to gods like the Maruts, the Ashvinis, Vishnu, Parjanya, Brahmanaspati, Aditi, Usha, Dyavaprithivi, Agni, Soma, the Vishvadevas, Surya and Savita.

There are three hundred and fifty-two *mantras* in the *Aindra Kanda*. These are divided into thirty-six sections (*khanda*). The *mantras* follow several different metres. These are *gayatri*, *vrihati*, *trishtupa*, *anushtupa*, *jagati*, *mahapamkti*, *pamkti*, *ushnika*, *kakupa*, *virata*, *ashti* and *ekapada*.

Aindra Kanda

Please listen to me, all of you who have assembled to perform a sacrifice. After you have prepared the juice of the *soma* herb, pray to the powerful Indra. Many are the people who pray to the great Indra. Chant hymns addressed to him. They will please him the way grass pleases a cow. Many are the wonderous deeds that Indra has performed. We have prepared for him the juice of the *soma* herb. Let it please him. And let him please us by granting us riches.

O cattle! Come to the place where the sacrifice is being held. Yield a lot of milk for the sacrifice. Your ears are adorned with golden ear-rings, you will give us the milk that is like food for us. O assembled sages! Chant hymns for the horses, for the cows and for Indra. We praise the great Indra who killed the demon Vritra. May Indra grant us prosperity.

O Indra! You are known for your valour. O powerful Indra! Grant us the objects of our desire. Our sacrifice spreads Indra's fame. Indra is the lord of all riches, let him grant us riches. Let us offer the juice of the *soma* herb to Indra. O Indra! You are the one who establishes everyone. Drink the *soma* juice that is like food for you. Be satiated, valiant one. It is for your pleasure that we have prepared the *soma* juice.

The sun is a manifestation of the great Indra. See how he rises, wealthy and powerful. See how he hurls his weapons for the welfare of mankind. You have arisen, O Indra! Rule over everything. Indra will befriend us. He hurls his weapons in all the four directions. He will ensure that demons do not decide to attack us in the darkness of the night. And even if demons do attack us, Indra will be on our side and we will repulse the demons.

O Indra! You are our protector. You are the one who grants us the objects of our desire. You are the one who grants us victory over our enemies. Grant us riches. We call upon Indra, be it a major battle or a minor one. We ask his help when we fight with the demon Vritra. Indra will come to our aid with his weapon, the *vajra*. Indra drank the *soma* juice offered by the sage Kadru. He killed the enemy known as Sahasravahu (the one with a thousand arms). All this establishes Indra's glory.

O Indra! We are desirous of receiving you in our midst. We bow in obeisance before you. Please realise that this is what we are trying to say through these hymns. The priests have lit a fire in your honour, they have prepared a seat for you. May Indra, who is ever youthful, befriend them. Destroy all our enemies. Remove all our impediments. After that, grant us the riches that we want.

The Maruts have whips in their hands. The sound of these whips is like a roar and demonstrates their power in the field of battle. (A hymn to the Maruts is inserted among hymns to Indra. The Maruts were of course, Indra's companions.)

O Indra! The juice of the *soma* herb is being offered at this sacrifice. A hunter with a net in his hand concentrates intensely on catching his prey. That concentration is rivalled by the concentration of the one who is performing this sacrifice. The rivers flow towards the ocean, eager to see the ocean. Just like that, people are thronging here for the sacrifice. They are eager to see you. Union with the gods is our best protection; it will grant us our wishes. We have assembled to unite with you.

O Brahmanaspati! Kakshivana, the son of Ushika, is performing this sacrifice. Bring glory to him.

Indra killed the demon Vritra. It is for him that people prepare the *soma* juice. Indra knows what our wishes are. Let Indra come and grace our sacrifice. Let him listen to our chanting.

O Savita! Grant us this day, progeny and prosperity. Let the misfortune that is like a nightmare stay away from us. (A hymn to Savita or Surya is interpolated. Of course, an earlier hymn does state that Surya is one of Indra's manifestations.)

Where is the young and powerful Indra? Where is the one who thunders? Where is he who does not bow down before anyone? Who is the learned one who is praying to Indra? In the valleys and at the confluences of rivers can be found the learned ones who chant hymns to Indra. Excellent indeed are the *mantras* that they chant. Pray to the Indra who is the emperor of all men.

Indra wears a helmet on his head. He comes to attend these special sacrifices and drinks *soma* juice mixed with flour and milk. He grants myriad riches. Like a cow is drawn to her calf, Indra is drawn to sacrifices through hymns.

During the night the energy of the sun is hidden. It is known as Tvashta then and resides in Chandrama's household.

Indra releases the mighty torrents and is aided by Pusha. O drinker of the *soma* juice! Use your steeds to come to our sacrifice. The priests have bathed well and are singing praises to Indra. They are making offerings to Indra. Through my sacrifice I will make Indra's mind turn towards me. That will make me as powerful as the sun. The union with Indra will grant me foodgrains. My cows will give me a plentiful supply of milk and clarified butter. My powers will be increased.

The gods Soma and Pusha are worthy enough to be seated in the chariots of the gods. It is they who provide men encouragement.

Those of you who are desirous of performing a sacrifice, chant special hymns for Indra. He destroys our enemies, he performs wonderful deeds and he drinks the *soma* juice.

O Mitra! Indra's steed is known as Hari. He drinks the juice of the *soma* herb. Sing Indra's praise. (This is not a reference to the god Mitra. The word *mitra* means a friend and a friend is being addressed in this hymn.)

O Indra! We are desirous of being your friend, we are desirous of singing your praise. The sage Kanva sang your glory through his hymns. Let our hymns praise the *soma* juice which has been extracted for Indra's sake. Let us worship the *soma* herb. We have purified the *soma* juice and kept it on a pedestal on the occasion of the sacrifice. Come hither and drink the *soma* juice.

At the time of milking, one calls upon the cow that gives one a supply of milk. Like that, every day, we call upon Indra. O powerful Indra! I offer this *soma* juice unto you. Accept it and be satiated. The *soma* juice has been kept in big and small containers. Drink it up, O great god! In each of my actions, in each of my battles, I call upon Indra to come to my aid.

Those who are going to perform sacrifices, those who are my friends! Listen to what I have to say. Come and assemble here. Sing Indra's praise.

Lord of all wealth, you are worshipped by everyone. Drink this *soma* juice and be pleased. Our Indra is great and supreme, he is famous as the wielder of the *vajra*. His valour increases like heaven itself. O Indra! Your hands are large. Take in your right hand the excellent riches that you may grant to us. Indra is the protector of cattle, of truth, and of righteous people. Let us pray to Indra so that he may help our sacrifice. Let us pray to Indra so that we may get to know him.

Indra will be our best friend. But what power will bring Indra hither? Indra has to be brought here so that we may be protected. O Indra! Your path is below

heaven, and it is along this path that you rule over the universe. Traverse a path from there to the place of our sacrifice. Come to our sacrifice. Performer of wonderful deeds, overwhelm us with riches. You will make us happy. This *soma* juice has been prepared for you. It is this *soma* juice that the powerful Maruts and the two Ashvinis drink.

O goddess! (It is not quite clear who this goddess is, the hymns seems to be addressed to Indra's mother.) We do not have any evil intentions. We do not wish to harm anyone. We are following the rites that have been laid down in the *mantras* of the *Vedas*.

O *brahmana* (a priest)! You who are learned in the knowledge of the *Atharva Veda*! You can sing *sama* hymns in the *vrihati* metre. Pray to the god Savita so that this sacrifice may be properly performed.

O goddess Usha! You manifest yourself from heaven and are unrivalled in your radiance. You are the goddess of truth. We sing many hymns in your praise,

There is no one who can stand up to Indra. He is the killer of eight hundred and ten Vritra demons. O Indra! Come here. The *soma* juice is like food for you, it pleases you no end. You destroy the most powerful of enemies. You are the one who killed the demon Vritra. Come to us in your greatness. Come to us for our protection. Such is Indra's amazing strength that he twirls the heaven and the earth like mere whisks. O Indra! This *soma* juice has been prepared for you. Come to it like a male pigeon goes to a female pigeon. Listen to our prayers.

Let the wind bring peace to our hearts. Let the wind bring us the herbs that banish ill health. Let us live for long.

Those who are protected by the learned never come to any harm.

O Indra! Grant us herds of cattle like you have done earlier. Grant us horses and chariots. Come to us with riches that will bring us glory. The cattle that you grant us will bring fame to our sacrifices. The milk and the clarified butter that they yield will be used in the sacrifices. You have many names, O great Indra! whichever is the sacrifice that you go to, you will find that hymns are being chanted in your praise.

O Sarasvati, the goddess of learning! You purify us, you grant us foodgrains, you give us riches, you bring wisdom to our hearts. Come and grace our sacrifice. (This is one of the relatively rare instances where Sarasvati is addressed as the goddess of learning.)

Who is the one who satisfies and pleases Indra? To him Indra will grant riches. Come to us Indra. We have prepared *soma* juice for you. Drink it and be seated on the throne we have reserved for you. Let us benefit from Indra's protection. Let us be united with the gods Mitra, Varuna and Aryama. (Aryama is a manifestation of Surya.)

Destroy our enemies, O Indra! You are the drinker of the *soma* juice, you are the one who wields the *vajra*. Grant us riches. Indra is deserving of worship, he is the one who makes sacrifices successful. Indra is a valiant warrior, he will be drawn to your sacrifice. As

a river mingles into the ocean, let this *soma* juice mingle with Indra. Who can be greater than thee, O Indra! Men sing *sama* hymns to please Indra. Men worship Indra. Let Indra grant us riches.

Indra is constant and learned. Let him banish our fears. All the hymns we sing are in praise of Indra. We pray to the gods Indra and Pusha so that our welfare may be granted, so that they may be our friends and grant us foodgrains. Destroyer of enemies, there is no one who is superior to you. There is no one who can rival you, O Indra!

I praise the Indra who will grant you salvation. I praise the Indra who will frighten our enemies, I praise the Indra who will grant us cattle. I have composed these hymns for Indra. Let these hymns be acceptable to you.

A person who is protected by the Maruts, by Mitra and by Aryama, will get to walk along the most superior of paths.

O Indra! You have a treasure-house of riches. You have preserved it in the ground. Grant us these riches. You know that Indra used his valour to kill the demon Vritra. He will use that valour to grant us riches. We have plenty of time to perform your sacrifice, O great Indra! We are waiting for your protection. Indra killed all the enemies. He used the foam of the waters to kill the demon Namuchi. (Namuchi can also be interpreted as a disease that is not easily cured, but which may be cured by drinking foam from the waves of the ocean.) This *soma* juice is for the great Indra, do

let him partake of it. A seat of sacrificial grass (*kusha*) has been prepared for Indra. Let him sit on it and gladden the hearts of his devotees.

Just as water irrigates the fields, the *soma* juice pleases Indra. O Indra! Descend to us from heaven with all your power. As soon as he was born, Indra took up arrows in his hand and asked his mother the names of the bravest warriors of all. Indra killed the demon Vritra, so he is the protector.

The learned gods Mitra and Varuna guide us along the righteous path. The god Aryama also belongs to the ranks of the gods. He too shows us the righteous path.

In the distant eastern sky Usha brings the first strokes of radiance. The radiance slowly spreads to the four directions.

The gods Mitra and Varuna are the performers of excellent deeds. Let them ensure that our cows provide a plentiful supply of milk and clarified butter. The Maruts roar when they come to the sacrifice. The great Vishnu traversed the universe in three of his footsteps. (This is a story that crops up in the *Puranas*.)

O Indra! Do not frequent the sacrifices of those who extract *soma* juice with anger in their hearts. But go to the sacrifices where *soma* juice is extracted in the proper way. Drink your fill of *soma* juice. Because our hymns sing of the glorious qualities of Indra, our hymns themselves are blessed. Indra is the enemy of those who do not sing hymns. Indra knows the words of our hymns — he hears the tunes. He is the all

powerful one who possesses many steeds. He is the one who frequents sacrifices where *soma* juice is offered.

O Indra! Come to our sacrifice. There is no need to go to other sacrifices and partake of the oblations offered there. Just as an youthful husband is devoted to his wife, be devoted to our sacrifice. Indra is everywhere. Come here god, and acknowledge our offerings of *soma* juice. The priests who are offering you the *soma* juice recite the sacred texts of the *brahmanas*. Befriend them and let there never be a parting of ways. Praiseworthy Indra, we are praying to you. Be pleased. Valiant god, make our limbs strong and powerful. May we be able to vanquish all our foes. You yourself have fought with and defeated powerful enemies.

Every object in this universe, mobile or immobile, is under your suzerainty. We worship you like we worship a cow that has not yet been milked. We call on Indra when we donate foodgrains. We call on Indra when we fight with demons like Vritra. We seek your help when we are engaged in a fight over the possession of horses. Pray to Indra. He will grant you immense riches.

O assembled priests! Listen to what I have to say. Indra kills the enemies who bring impediments. Indra drinks the *soma* juice and is pleased. Chant hymns to him and seek his blessings. I too pray to him to make him look upon me with favour.

We have extracted the *soma* juice. We have mixed it with the milk of cows. Drink the juice, O Indra! Be

pleased. Be like a brother unto us on the occasion of this sacrifice. Show us the righteous path — guide us through your wisdom. Come and grant us prosperity. Give us cows. Give us also horses.

O Maruts! The sage Vashishtho prayed to all of you. Come to our sacrifice. Sit side by side and drink the *soma* juice we have offered.

Friends, do not pray to anyone other than Indra. That would be a waste of time. Pray to Indra alone and chant his hymns repeatedly. A priest who pleases Indra can never be subdued. If the veins of the throat are severed and blood gushes out, it is Indra alone who can join the severed parts together. Let Indra come to our sacrifice in a golden chariot drawn by thousands of horses.

A traveller can cross a desert on a horse bedecked with peacock feathers. He faces no impediments. A hunter uses his net to catch birds. O Indra! We will catch you like the hunter catches the birds. Your presence will free us from all impediments, like the traveller in the desert. Manifest yourself, O Indra! There is no one but you who can bring us happiness. You alone are valiant enough to grant us protection. You will drink the *soma* juice. In this sacrifice dedicated to the gods, we call upon Indra before the sacrifice is started, we call upon him while the sacrifice is going on and we call upon him when the sacrifice is over. Let my hymns increase Indra's fame. Your devotees are as radiant as the god Agni. The great Indra never wastes away. Like a thirsty deer

hastens to a pond of water, Indra will hasten to the sacrifice that the sage Kanva is performing.

O Indra! Grant us the boons we desire. Grant us riches. You are the one who robbed the demons (*asuras*) of their property. Protect the one who prays to you. Be seated on the seat he has prepared for you.

Listen to me, you who wish to perform a sacrifice. Let the gods Mitra, Aryama and Varuna be seated at the sacrifice. After they have been seated, sing for them the hymns that have been composed in metrical forms.

O Indra! The officiating priests first pray to you so that you may drink the *soma* juice. The Maruts, offspring of Rudra, also acknowledge you to be supreme and pray to you. O Maruts! Compose and sing hymns to Indra. He killed the demon Vritra. He performed wonderous deeds. He freed the waters with one stroke of his *vajra*. Those who are observing the sacrifice will sing hymns to Indra composed in the *vrihati* metre. The radiance of Surya has been brought to the sacrifice through Indra's aid.

O Indra! Grant us wisdom so that we may perform the sacrifice. Teach us, the way a father teaches his son. Bless us, so that the radiance of the sun may be always present at our sacrifice. Be not parted from us, come to our sacrifice and be our protector. You are like a brother unto us. We are seated on the occasion of this sacred sacrifice and desire your presence. Grant us power and strength and riches.

Be our protector. It is known that you are valiant, whether you are far or near. A steed with hair on its neck is fleet of foot. Our hymns will be as swift as that steed and will summon you to the sacrifice. You who are observing the sacrifice, chant special hymns for Indra. O Indra! Give us three-storeyed houses for dwellings. In these houses we will be happy in the three seasons. Let there be no need for weapons in these dwellings. The sun is the refuge of all rays. Like that, Indra is the refuge of the entire universe. Indra divides up the universe among all its subjects. Like a son receives his appointed share from his father, we demand our share from Indra.

Indra has a long life. A person who does not worship gods receives no foodgrains. Let us worship Indra. Let him come to our sacrifice on fleet-footed steeds. Let our hymns please and grace Indra. Let his presence adorn our hymns. O Indra! You are the lord of inferior riches, you are the lord of medium riches and you are the lord of superior riches. You can grant us all the riches you want. No one can prevent you from giving us cows.

O Indra! Where have you gone? Where are you now? We know that your mind is drawn to many places. Come to our sacrifice, we are singing hymns for you. We pleased the wielder of the *vajra* yesterday with our offerings of *soma* juice. We have prepared *soma* juice today as well. Let Indra come here and grace our sacrifice.

Indra is the king of all men. He rides a swift chariot. He destroys the soldiers of the foes. He killed the

demon Vritra. Let us pray to him. O Indra! Free us from our fears and make us fearless. Destroy our enemies. Destroy hatred. A sacrifice at which *soma* juice is offered is sacred. A person who performs such a sacrifice is blessed. Let the pillars of his house be firm and strong. Let him have a plentiful supply of foodgrains. Let Indra befriend the sages. The demons are drinkers of the *soma* juice. Let Indra destroy their cities.

Indra has sent the sun. It is true indeed that Indra is great. Indra, you are the son of Aditi. We sing of Indra's glory. When Indra befriends a man, that man is blessed with chariots drawn by horses, excellent cows, abundant foodgrains and handsome jewellery. O Indra! Even if heaven expands a hundredfold, it will not be able to encompass you. Even if the earth expands a hundredfold, it will not be able to bind you. O wielder of the *vajra*! Even if there were to be a thousand suns, they would pale into insignificance beside you.

Indra is called upon in the east, the west, the north and the south. You have been prayed to for Anu's aid, you have been prayed to for Turvasu's aid. (Anu and Turvasu were the sons of King Yayati.) There is no one who can frighten Indra. His devotees are blessed with valour. They are freed from their miseries; they can donate as much of foodgrains as they want.

O Indra and O Agni! The goddess Usha has no feet. But it is dawn and Usha has developed feet so that she can get here before those who are asleep awaken. There are thirty *muhurtas* (unit of time) in a day. Usha

covers one *muhurta* in one of her footsteps. O Indra! The place where I am performing the sacrifice is not very far. Come to the sacrifice. Come with your brothers, the other gods.

Bring Indra to the sacrifice. Let him not be far away. Let him be close and bless our sacrifice. Let him listen to our hymns. Let the performers of the sacrifice extract *soma* juice for Indra. Let them make cakes (*purodasha*) for Indra. Let them perform the sacrifice to obtain Indra's favour. We call upon the Indra who is omniscient. We call upon the Indra who can destroy several enemies at one stroke. Indra is the source of **all** inspiration. O Indra! Come to our aid.

O Ashvinis! Grant us the riches that you have the power to grant, night and day. What you can grant is never diminished. Let what we receive also never be diminished.

O Varuna! Men chant hymns at the time of sacrifices. Be pleased with these prayers and protect us.

O sage Medhatithi! Indra harnesses two horses to his chariot, he is the wielder of the *vajra*. His chariot is golden, he drinks the *soma* juice and is gratified. Protect your cows after Indra has drunk the *soma* juice.

Let Indra listen to our hymns and come to drink the *soma* juice. Indra cannot be exchanged for countless riches. Indra is greater than my father or my brother. He is as great as my mother. May Indra make me prosperous.

O Inara! The *soma* juice has been prepared for you and mixed with curds. Come to the sacrifice on your steeds and drink the *soma* juice. Listen to our hymns and grant riches to those who sing the hymns. Indra is as desirable as a valuable cow that yields a lot of milk. O Indra! The loftiest of mountains cannot bar your path. No one can prevent you from granting me the riches that you want. Who can fathom the mysteries of the great Indra? Who can comprehend the magnitude of the foodgrains that Indra can grant? Adorned with a helmet, Indra drinks *soma* juice and destroys the cities of his enemies.

Indra punishes the sinners. Let him protect our sacrifice from sinners who may invade it from the four directions.

O Tvashta, architect of the gods! O Parjanya, the god of rains! O Brahmanaspati! O Aditi, mother of the gods! O other gods! You are the ones who will remove our miseries, you are the ones who will grant us protection. Be pleased with our hymns and grant us protection.

Indra is not like a cow that cannot bear calves. Indra unites with a devotee who offers him oblations. Indra's boons will grant us riches. O Indra! Harness your steeds to your chariot and come with the Maruts to our sacrifice. Indra is the wielder of the *vajra*. To him *soma* juice was offered at earlier sacrifices. To him *soma* juice is being offered now as well. It is for him that the hymns are being chanted.

Usha is the daughter of Surya. Her appearance banishes the darkness of the night. The beautiful Usha brings radiance.

O Ashvinis! Men call upon you for riches and protection. You go to the person who summons you. No dweller of earth can make you appear unless you wish to, O Ashvinis! The performer of the sacrifice is tired after crushing *soma* herbs on stone. Make him prosperous like a king, ye gods! The *soma* juice that has been prepared for a sacrifice dedicated to you is exceedingly sweet. Drink it and drink also the *soma* juice that was prepared yesterday. Grant jewels and riches to those who offer you oblations.

O Indra! I offered you *soma* juice. I chanted hymns to you. Have I angered and offended you by frequently asking you for boons? Have you become like a tiger enraged. But you are our master. And who does not demand boons from his master?

Indra has come to the sacrifice riding on his powerful steeds. Hasten to prepare *soma* juice for him. O Indra! Grant riches to us insignificant people. We will call for your aid at the time of every battle. But please do not grant riches to the sinners. O Indra! You kill your enemies in battle, you create impediments for them. But you remove all our impediments. Indra is supreme in heaven, and the dust of the earth cannot encircle him. Indra has the measure of the entire universe.

Indra loves *soma* juice that has been mixed with milk. We have prepared this so that he may come to

our sacrifice. We have chanted hymns to him, we have got a seat ready for him. Indra will come here and protect us. He will grant us riches. Indra splintered the clouds and brought forth torrents of rain. In the process, he destroyed the demons and pleased the pure ocean. We will grasp Indra's right hand so that he may grant us riches.

When danger threatens, one's actions must be governed by one's intelligence. It is for this reason that our leaders call upon Indra at the time of battle. O Indra! You love sacrifices the way one loves a beautiful bird. We unite with Indra in the rays of the sun. O Indra! Remove the darkness. Fill our eyes with energy. Free us from our bondage.

Agni is the messenger of Varuna. Agni was created in the atmosphere (*antariksha*). Indra resides in the atmosphere in the form of a handsome bird with beautiful wings. Those who pray to you from the deepest recesses of their hearts can see you in the atmosphere. It is for Indra that hymns are sung.

A demon named Krishna reached the banks of the Amshumati river. He moved very fast and attacked with ten thousand soldiers. The valiant Indra repulsed the attack and killed the enemy. When the demon Vritra attacked, all the other gods fled in fear. They deserted their friend Indra. But Indra adopted the Maruts as his companions and killed Vritra.

Through Indra's grace, even the aged remain conversant with their duties. Hearken to Indra's mighty deeds. Those who die today are born tomorrow to live on earth yet again.

O Indra! As soon as you were born, you killed seven demons whom none had been able to vanquish. Four of them were Krishna, Vritra, Namuchi and Shambara. You removed the darkness that prevailed over heaven and earth. You make this universe and its regions beautiful. O Indra! Make us invincible in battle. Men must offer *soma* juice to the mighty Indra. The learned must pray to him. Indra will help those who are devoted to him. We call upon Indra for our protection. Chant hymns to Indra so that you may obtain foodgrains. O sages, you who have succeeded in controlling your senses! Sing of the glory of Indra. Indra's *vajra* flashes in the atmosphere. He provides sweet water to those who pray to him and water flows in abundance on earth. It is this water which sustains the milk of the cows and the juices of the herbs.

Indra is an eagle (*suparna*) in the atmosphere. He is immensely strong and is worshipped by the gods. We call upon Indra to come to us so that our welfare may be ensured. Indra will come to our aid and will protect us. He is a valiant warrior, worthy of being summoned before every battle. In his right hand Indra holds the *vajra*. His beard and moustache strike terror in the hearts of his enemies. He is the supreme god. To his devotees, Indra grants riches. We pray to the Indra who killed the demon Vritra. We pray to the Indra who grants us foodgrains. We pray to the Indra who can kill several enemies at one stroke.

Our enemies wish to attack us. These sinners descend upon us with fierce weapons. But with Indra's grace we will overcome these foes. The learned pray to

Indra for victory, for water and for rains. Indra is summoned when the gods are engaged in a fight. O Indra! You are like a mountain. Your sons are valiant warriors. Ascend your great chariot and come to us with foodgrains. Listen to our hymns, come and partake of the oblations we have offered.

The axle is the fulcrum of the wheel. Like that, Indra is the axle of the earth and heaven. Stirred by our hymns, Indra will shower down rain from the atmosphere. The hymns sung on earth will reach Indra's ears in the atmosphere. Indra will come to our sacrifice like a beloved grandson. We will harness Indra with our hymns like horses to chariots.

O Indra! The reciter is chanting your hymns. A juggler balances a bamboo pole above him. Exactly similarly, the priest has held you aloft above him in the course of this sacrifice. Indra's glory rivals the expanse of the great ocean and the hymns sing of this glory. O Indra! The pavilion (*mandapa*) in which the sacrifice is being held is full of vessels filled to the brim with *soma* juice. It is for you that the *soma* juice has been extracted. Grant me all the riches that I do not have.

O Indra! Listen to the prayers of the sage Tirashchi. Grant me cows and riches. Fulfil me. May the *soma* juice course through your body like the rays of the sun course through the atmosphere. Come to the sacrifice on your horses, summoned by the hymns of the sage Kanva. Also reside in heaven, for we are gratified when you rule in heaven. A warrior on a chariot never misses his true destination. A cow always reaches its

calf. Like that, do not forget your destination. You will come to our sacrifice. Hasten here speedily. The *soma* juice and the hymns require your presence here. The *soma* juice has been mixed with pure milk for your pleasure. Let these offerings of *soma* juice bring us wealth and prosperity.

All those who wish to perform a sacrifice, do not forget that Indra is omniscient and omnipotent. It is to him that the first offerings of the *soma* juice must be made. Let us have a plentiful supply of the *soma* juice. Let harsh words not impair our sacrifice. May unkind words keep their distance. Indra is the preserver of the righteous and the destroyer of the evil. We will bring him here on his chariot.

Indra is chief. He comes to the sacrifice to partake of the oblations. It is Indra who maintains all the other gods. The Maruts act as escorts when Indra goes to attend a sacrifice. When Indra is pleased, he showers down rain and makes foodgrains grow. Indra is the lord of power and wealth. He has no hatred for anyone; he blesses everyone. I worship the great Indra. He is as swift as a fleet-footed steed. Let him bless my mouth, let him bless my other limbs, let him grant me a long life. Indra is young and learned. He destroys the cities of our foes. He is the one who nurtures all good deeds.

The oblations that are being offered to Indra were prepared while three hymns were chanted. (Three is obviously being used as a general number.) The priests will take this news to Indra. He will bless this sacrifice and make it a success. The learned know that

Indra possesses two horses. He harnesses them to his chariot when he comes to attend a sacrifice. Those who perform sacrifices worship Indra. He grants the desires of his devotees. Let us sing hymns which describe the glory of Indra, the one who killed many enemies at the same time. The best of my sons and friends will chant his hymns.

Indra is the leader of the universe, no one can stand up to him. We call upon Indra. O Maruts! We also call upon you. We wish to hear the thunder of your chariot-wheels. The one who sings these hymns is protected from all enemies. Other men become his friends and he is blessed. He is shielded from sin and the gods themselves bless him. Indra, the performer of wonderful deeds, will grant us what we want. Make us great through the grant of riches.

O Usha of fair complexion! Your arrival heralds the dawn when men and animals wake up. The birds take to the sky according to their wishes.

O gods! What is the point of remaining in the sky once it is day? What sacrifices are held there? What oblations do you receive there? Come and attend our sacrifice. *Rik* and *sama mantras* are being chanted at our sacrifice. They will carry our message to the gods.

The chief priest prays to Indra. It is Indra who defeated the brave soldiers of the enemy. It is Indra who is adorned with diverse weapons. It is Indra who deserves the best of seats on the occasion of the sacrifice. O wielder of the *vajra*! I have great respect for your anger. It is the anger which destroys the evil of

heart. It is Indra who makes the waters flow for the benefit of mankind. The heaven and the earth make a path for Indra and the earth trembles at his footsteps.

Listen to me, residents of the earth. Indra rules over heaven through his power. Gather together and chant his praise. Indra is to be worshipped like a respected guest. He is capable of destroying all enemies alone. O Indra! We have embarked on this course of action after having sought sanctuary with you. Accept our obeisance. Our hymns incessantly glorify the immortal Indra. We embrace Indra the way a wife embraces her husband. We have assembled together to praise him through these *mantras*. Please the lord of heaven so that he may bring us welfare. Let his energy encompass the four directions. Pray repeatedly to Indra. Let him come to our sacrifice.

This heaven and this earth abound with water. The water sustains all living beings. And the water is generated from the supreme god's energy. Aditi, the mother of the gods, gave birth to Indra. Indra is the greatest of the great, the emperor of all men. Indra fills heaven and earth with the radiance of Usha. O priests who are performing the sacrifice! Offer oblations to Indra and sing hymns for him. It is Indra who destroyed the demon Krishna and killed Krishna's wives. Indra holds the *vajra* in his right hand, he is accompanied by the soldiers of the Maruts. Let us make Indra our friend so that he may protect us.

When he hears the *sama* hymns sung at a sacrifice, Indra purifies the *soma* juice that is offered at the

sacrifice. The great Indra is deserving of repeated prayers. He brings welfare to men. O Indra! Several have been the sacrifices at which you have drunk *soma* juice. There was a sacrifice that was held after Vishnu's arrival. (The meaning of this sentence is not clear.) There was another sacrifice that was held by Apta Trita. (This is also not at all clear.) At many such sacrifices you have gone with the Maruts to drink *soma* juice. Please come to our sacrifice and drink the *soma* juice that we have offered. The priests will offer sweet *soma* juice to Indra and please him.

I ask all my friends to pray to Indra. He is capable of defeating all enemies single-handedly. He is alone capable of granting men riches. Who can stand up to Indra? He is the lord of everyone. Indra killed the demon Vritra through his valour. He killed the demon Shambara at the request of King Divodasa. Indra will drink our *soma* juice. The lord of this gigantic universe will come to us. We pray that the *soma* juice will increase Indra's prowess and enable him to kill more demons.

O gods, sons of Aditi! May our sons and grandsons have long lives.

O Indra! You are familiar with the path along which sinners cannot bring us impediments. We pray to you so that you may show us this path and remove all our difficulties. May we be free of dangers and disease.

O gods, sons of Aditi! Let us not suffer from ill-health. Banish our enemies and remove all evil

thoughts from our hearts. Lead us away from temptation.

O Indra! Drink the *soma* juice. May it please you. This stone has been used to crush the *soma* herbs for you. You have no enemies, great Indra. No one can rule over you. Your devotees crave that you may be like a brother unto them. Listen to me, my friends. Indra granted you a lot of riches earlier. Pray to him now for protection.

O Maruts, who are swift of foot! Come to us and protect us from all damage. You are brave warriors, the terrible demons tremble when they catch sight of you. Do not remain far away from us.

O Indra! You are the lord of horses, you are the lord of cows, you are the ruler of the earth. Come and drink the *soma* juice we have offered. Please ensure that evil enemies do not get close to the cowherds. We will defeat these enemies with your aid.

O Maruts! The cows love each other. Notice how they lick each other. They are like sisters. Like the cows, men should also love each other.

Indra is the performer of wonderful deeds. He will grant us power and prosperity. He will grant us brave sons. We pray to Indra so that our wishes may be granted. We will make Indra our friend. We have gathered together to offer this *soma* juice to Indra the way birds tend to flock together. Just as men crave the proximity of superior men, we too crave your proximity.

There are white cows by Indra's side. These cows fulfil the desires of the faithful and yield excellent milk. These cows will drink the *soma* juice we have offered. The *soma* juice has the quality of increasing one's prowess. We have composed hymns in praise of the *soma* juice. We wish that all our enemies on earth may be destroyed. Indra will protect us in all our battles, be they great or small. Let us please the Indra who killed Vritra.

The wielder of the *vajra* lives on a mountain. He is omnipotent. Indra kills those who use unfair and fraudulent means to fight with; it is for this reason that he used treachery to kill Vritra. (The details are not given. But as stated in the *Puranas*., Indra pretended to befriend Vritra and killed him when the demon relaxed his vigil as a result of the treaty of friendship.) Indra will invade the fortresses of the enemies from all four directions. He will destroy the enemies with his powerful *vajra*. All the enemies will be forced to bow down in obeisance.

When a battle is fought, it is the victorious who become wealthy. We will harness our horses to our chariots in readiness for battle. It is Indra who decides who will win and attain glory and riches. We pray to Indra so that we may be wealthy.

O Indra! The guests who have come on the occasion of the sacrifice have been fed and are satiated. The *brahmanas* (priests) have begun to recite *mantras*. Harness your steeds and come to the sacrifice. Come close, great Indra, so that you can hear our hymns better. We have said that you will

come, do not make us out to be liars. Chandrama brightens up the atmosphere with rays, energy flashes in the sky in the form of golden lightning. But none of them can touch Indra's feet.

O Dyavaprithivi! Hearken to our prayers. O Ashvinis! Your beloved *rishis* (sages) are chanting hymns. Hearken to our prayers.

O Agni! You are full of energy and never suffer from old age. We light you; your flames blaze in heaven. Listen to our prayers and grant us foodgrains. At our sacrifice we have prepared a special seat for Agni. Agni is supreme.

O Usha! Wake us up from our slumber so that we may tread the path to prosperity. O Usha! I am the sage Satyashrava, the son of Vaya. Awaken me, you who are a lover of truth.

O Soma! Inspire us so that we may prepare the *soma* juice well. Motivate us to action and give us prowess. Like a beautiful cow craves for grass, we crave your friendship.

Indra increases his prowess by drinking *soma* juice. He wears a handsome helmet. He harnesses beauteous steeds to his chariot and he holds the *vajra* in his right hand. I know Indra's chariot well. It is stocked with containers full of *soma* juice.

I pray to Agni through my hymns so that he may grant me foodgrains. Agni resides in a household in the form of wealth. Agni frequents the place of a sacrifice.

O gods! O Mitra, Varuna and Aryama! Keep our enemies away and improve our lot. Let sin and misery stay away from our door.

Let Indra be present in our vessels together with Mitra, Pusha and Bhaga. (Bhaga is a manifestation of Surya.) Let Soma be present in our vessels and provide us with foodgrains. Let our enemies be destroyed. O Soma! You are like the great ocean. Overflow from the vessels of the gods. Fill our vessels so that we may prosper. Soma is learned. He purifies the water that **he** is mixed with. O Soma! I will pray to you after I have extracted your juice. Soma is sacred. He protects the king and destroys our enemies.

Do you know what is the relationship between the Maruts and Rudra? (The Maruts are Rudra's offspring.)

O Agni! The priests are chanting your praise through the hymn known as *oha*. You will grant our well-being.

O Savita! You grant well-being to men. Accept these offerings of *soma* juice mixed with rice. We will attain heaven. We will obtain victorious horses.

O Soma! You are full of energy. Course through our vessels. Fill our vessels to the brim.

O Indra! You are the destroyer of enemies. Grant us riches from every direction. Indra is famous and learned. We pray to Indra so that he may kill the demon Ahi. O Indra! The gods known as the Ribhus have readied your chariot, Tvashta has built the wonderful *vajra* for you.

Those who perform sacrifices obtain happiness and excellent dwellings. Those who do not perform sacrifices receive nothing.

Cows are always pure and sacred. They nurture us.

O Usha! Come with all your radiance. May cows with full udders tread along your path.

O Indra! We wish to be close to you, we pray to you. The powerful Maruts worship the youthful Indra. The learned sing hymns in praise of Indra.

O Agni! You are omniscient. You take our offerings to the gods. Stay close to us and make us prosper. May you grant us riches. Be present at our sacrifice and destroy our enemies.

The night (*ratrī*) is Usha's sister and Usha makes her own sister go away. Through her radiance Usha illuminates the proper path.

May Indra and the other gods guide us in the observance of appropriate rites. Offerings made to Indra merge into his being the way small roads converge to a highway. Let the gods be pleased through our prayers and grant us foodgrains and power. May we have brave sons who live for a hundred years. Let Indra, Mitra and Varuna grant us foodgrains.

Indra rules over the entire world. *Soma* juice mixed with flour has been kept in three vessels for Indra. Indra and Vishnu will drink this *soma* juice, as they drank it earlier.

Surya brings welfare to a thousand persons. The intelligent worship Surya. Surya is like pure energy. He is clear and free from darkness. It is Surya who sends the radiant Usha. The moon fades away before Surya's radiance.

O Indra! Come close to us like Agni comes to the place of a sacrifice. Come to us the way a victorious king returns home. We call upon you the way a son calls upon his father for food, the way a battle beckons to a brave warrior. Soldiers call to Indra before battle.

I have established Agni to the north of the sacrificial pyre. I pray to the divine and powerful Agni. I pray to Indra and Vayu as well. Let my hymns and prayers be listened to. Let my words reach the ears of the gods.

A sage named Marut calls to Vishnu and Indra through his prayers. Let the Maruts also come to grace his sacrifice.

The strained *soma* juice is green of hue. Its energy blazes like that of the sun. Many are the forms that *soma* juice adopts.

I pray to the god Savita, loved by the world. His rays light up the region between the earth and heaven. Let the golden rays of Savita be everywhere.

I pray to the god Agni, he is the one who makes a sacrifice a success. He is as respected as a learned priest. Let these offerings of clarified butter please Agni.

Indra is the driving force of the universe. His deeds are praised on earth as they are in heaven. His power destroyed that of the demons. Indra freed the waters. Let Indra's power increase and let him accept our offerings.

(This concludes the *Aindra Kanda* of the *Sama Veda Samhita*.

We now move on to the *Pavamana Kanda*. The word *pavamana* means that which has been purified or strained. This indicates that this part is concerned with the straining of the *soma* juice. All the *mantras* of this part are addressed to Soma.

There are one hundred and nineteen *mantras* in the *Pavamana Kanda*, divided into eleven sections (*khanda*). The *mantras* follow seven different metres. These are *gayatri*, *vrihati*, *trishtupa*, *anushtupa*, *jagati*, *ushnika* and *kakupa*.)

Pavamana Kanda

O Soma! Your juice is like food and was born in lofty heaven. Let happiness from heaven descend on earth. O Soma! Flow in tasty torrents so that Indra may be pleased. Flow into our pots. Your juice destroys evil sinners and brings happiness to the faithful.

The *mantras* of the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda* are being chanted. Cows full of milk have been got ready for milking. The flow of *soma* juice is green of hue. O Soma! Fill our pots with sweet juice so that Indra may be pleased. It is on mountains that the *soma* herb grows and the sacred juice is extracted from

these herbs. Let the juice flow to its appointed place the way a falcon comes home to roost. O juice which is green! Come into our vessels so that the Maruts and the other gods may be satiated. Strained *soma* juice is superior to everything. The *soma* herbs are crushed between planks and with stones.

The sacred *soma* juice has been extracted. It has been poured into vessels for the sacrifice. *Soma* juice is mixed with water. The juice flows into water the way a buffalo gravitates towards the forest. Let the *soma* juice be sacred, let it make us famous among men. Let it destroy our enemies. O Soma! We call upon you. Increase our prowess. Increase our inspiration. You are strained while the learned chant sacred hymns. Like a chariot driven by a charioteer, you flow into our vessels.

Soma juice is extracted by those who crave for cows, horses and brave sons. O Soma! You dazzle our eyes. Flow into the vessels so that the straining may begin. Let the juice please Indra and Vayu. It is the sacred *soma* juice which created lightning from the divine energy of the fire. After extraction, the *soma* juice is strained to the chanting of sweet hymns. The *soma* juice imparts wisdom. It mingles with the waves of the Sindhu (Indus) river. It is to the praiseworthy *soma* juice that hymns are chanted. See how the juice courses in our vessels.

The gods come to drink the juice which has been extracted according to superior methods. The juice is mixed with water and milk. The sacred *soma* juice destroys enemies and increases one's wisdom. The

hymns chanted by priests are like adornments for the *soma* juice. When the *soma* juice is poured into pots, it is offered to Indra. Like a horse harnessed to a chariot is released, the *soma* juice is extracted by crushing with wooden planks. It is then released into the vessels kept for straining. The juice makes our vessels full and attracts the gods.

The powerful *soma* juice banishes sinners and its extraction marks the beginning of the sacrifice. It flows into pots the way cows go out to graze. The black sediments are removed when the *soma* juice is strained. Let *soma* juice banish from the sacrifice those who are not devoted to the gods.

O Soma! You furnish the water that gives men life. You manifest the energy of the sun. Flow into our vessels after the straining. Increase the prowess of the demon-slayer Indra. Pots full of *soma* juice will please Indra. The *soma* juice energises our food and water. Let the strained *soma* juice be stored in our containers.

Green is the *soma* juice. It is as radiant as the sun. It is like a beloved friend to us. *Soma* juice will grant us happiness and prosperity. It will protect us from our enemies. Many are the people who crave for *soma* juice. We too desire to possess it. *Soma* is the child of the mountains. It is crushed, strained and purified for Indra. *Soma* banishes evil thoughts and gives us happiness.

O Soma! You increase our strength in a thousand ways. Give us wealth and food. Be plentiful in forests and at places where sacrifices are held. Let us hear the noise of the *soma* juice being strained. The *soma* juice

is strong and radiant. Let it increase our strength. Learned sages strain the *soma* juice. Let *soma* juice be strained to please the gods. Let *soma* juice grant us protection.

O Soma! Your greatness deserves respect. *Soma* juice mixed with water is famous and grants us food. It is strained into pots so that it may bring us prosperity. The sage Ayasya strained *soma* juice for worshipping the gods. *Soma* destroys one's enemies, it also destroys those who do not give alms. Strained and purified, the *soma* juice glistens on the occasion of a sacrifice.

Soma is the best offering that is possible. The priests crush *soma* herbs with stones and then mix the juice with water. The strained juice, green of hue, flows into containers the way a man enters a city. The containers for the *soma* juice are made out of wood. Before offering it to the gods, *soma* juice has to be mixed with the waters of the river Sindhu. This sweet juice brings happiness and bliss. The strainers for straining the juice are made of goat-hair.

O Soma! I crave for your friendship. My enemies make me suffer, destroy them for my sake. You are the juice that is extracted with clean hands, you are the juice that ripples into containers. O pure juice! You grant me many golden riches. You increase our wisdom and bring us welfare. Make our sacrifice sacred with your pure juice. The juice has been purified for Indra, he will come here with the Maruts. It will please the gods who come to attend our sacrifice. Indra and the Maruts desire the pure *soma* juice.

O Soma! Come swiftly and flow into our vessels. Be purified by the priests of the sacrifice and grant us foodgrains. *Soma* juice is extracted on an auspicious day. Hymns are chanted to the juice by a priest who is as great as the sage Ushana. The energy that is in the juice brings purification. The priests who offer oblations sing *Rig*, *Yajur* and *Sama* hymns in praise of Soma. Just as a cow goes to a bull, true devotees go to the *soma* juice. The golden juice will be offered to the gods. *Soma* juice grants us intelligence. The juice is the creator of heaven, the earth, Agni, Surya, Indra and Vishnu.

Let this praise of *soma* spread everywhere. Varuna is associated with the water. Like that, *soma* juice is associated with the granting of jewels to devotees. *Soma* juice nurtures cattle. It increases our strength. The sound of *soma* juice being strained into wooden vessels is sacred. It is *soma* juice which ensures a flow of milk in cows. Anyone who is performing a sacrifice chants hymns in praise of Soma. Countless are the riches that the *soma* juice grants. Soma is always present at a sacrifice. Sweet *soma* juice is mixed with water, after being strained in strainers made of goat-hair. Indra is pleased with *soma* juice.

Soma is the driving force behind armies, it can be found in front of chariots. Soldiers who drink *soma* juice are happy. Let sweet streams of *soma* juice flow. It is *soma* juice which makes Surya so radiant. Pray to Soma. We will worship the gods with *soma* juice and obtain riches. Let *soma* juice, the creator of Dyavaprithivi, flow towards Indra. Let *soma* juice

grant us riches with both hands. Let *soma* juice sharpen the blades of our weapons. *Soma* is the best offering that one can make at a sacrifice. It grants us cows. Let the green *soma* juice be stirred with our fingers. *Soma* flows into our vessels like a fleet-footed steed.

The rays of the sun adorn *soma* juice the way jewellery adorns a handsome horse. Let our fingers crush the *soma* herbs, let our hands mix *soma* juice with water. Let *soma* juice listen to our prayers and flow into our vessels, like a cowherd heading towards a barn. *Soma* juice is the lord of all power. It destroys demons and banishes sinners. Let the pure juice grant us power and honour. *Soma* juice reaches the learned Indra. Such are the wonderous deeds that *soma* juice performs. It reaches the gods. It created the energy of the sun. *Soma* juice is dear to everyone's heart, the first hymns on the occasion of a sacrifice are sung to *Soma*. *Soma* juice flows into water for the mixing, like a horse marches into battle. Let the priests chant hymns in praise of *soma* juice. Let us worship the juice.

Listen to me, all those who wish to perform a sacrifice. Let not dogs with long tongues get close to the vessels of *soma* juice. *Soma* juice is the nurturer; it is worthy of being drunk. Its radiance illuminates heaven and earth. The sweet *soma* juice is prepared for Indra; it is like a friend unto us; it guides us along the righteous path. It increases our concentration and frees us from sin. It is purified for our sake.

Countless are the numbers who praise *soma* juice. Countless are the numbers whom *soma* juice nourishes. O Soma! Grant us riches. Like a calf reaches for its mother, pure water reaches and mixes with *soma* juice. *Soma* juice defeats our enemies and is worthy of respect. The learned praise *soma* juice so that the juice may make our cows full with milk. Beautiful is the greenish-brown hue of *soma* juice. Let *soma* juice reach the gods. The sage Bhrigu banished sacrifices that did not involve a giving of alms. Like that, banish dogs from the proximity of vessels of *soma* juice.

Soma juice grants us prosperity. It thrives when it is mixed with water. The great god Soma climbs into Surya's chariot to circumambulate the earth. Let *soma* juice grace our sacrifice. Let our hymns reach the ears of the gods and let our enemies starve from shortage of food. The sound of the *soma* juice in these vessels is like the sound of Indra's *vajra*. *Soma* juice is present at the sacrifice where cows dripping with milk and clarified butter have been brought. Let *soma* juice fill Indra's belly. Let *soma* juice be mixed with a lot of water; let *soma* juice be strained through a strainer with six holes.

Soma juice is praised by the priests, it increases the power of the gods. Powerful are the priests who have crushed *soma* herbs. It is *soma* juice which increases the glory of Surya and Usha. Twenty-one cows have been gathered so that their milk may be mixed with *soma* juice. The number of vessels into which *soma* juice is strained is four. (The twenty-one cows have

been interpreted to be the twelve months, the five seasons, the three *lokas* (regions) and Aditya taken together. The four vessels have been interpreted to mean the four directions.)

O Soma! Keep ill-health away from us. Let sinners not be permitted to drink the sacred *soma* juice. *Soma* juice is as handsome as a king. The sight of *soma* juice in a pot is like the sight of a falcon. The priests mix *soma* juice with the milk of cows. The gods taste *soma* juice mixed with honey and clarified butter. Let gold be used to purify the juice. Soma is the lord of learning; he is everywhere in the universe. Let *soma* juice increase the drinker's enthusiasm.

Let *soma* juice go to Indra. Friends and priests, come and be seated. Let us sing *soma* hymns in praise of *soma* juice. Adorn the juice with this praise the way a child is adorned with ornaments. *Soma* juice is the son of the waters; it is like the life of a sacrifice. *Soma* juice exists in heaven and on earth. O Soma! Grant us horses, cows and riches. Let us receive the *soma* juice in the milk of cows.

We praise the *soma* juice so that we may obtain milk and riches. Grant us sons. Let the all-knowing Soma please Indra. Soma is the lord of all foodgrains. Let the *soma* juice flow into pots of honey. Let it reach the gods. Let *soma* juice please the gods.

O priests! *Soma* juice is as swift as a horse. Extract the *soma* juice, mix it with water, mix it with milk. It will bring you bliss. It will grant you milk, land and children. O Soma! You know the secrets of the births of

the gods. You confer immortality. *Soma* juice will be like an armour that protects us from our enemies.

(This concludes the *Pavamana Kanda* of the *Sama Veda Samhita*.)

We now move on to the *Aranya* (or *Aranyaka*) *Kanda*. As mentioned earlier, Vedic literature consists of four components - the *Samhitas*, the *Brahmanas*, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*. The *Samhitas* have *mantras*, the *Brahmanas* describe sacrifices and the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads* describe spiritual knowledge. The *Aranyaka Kanda* is so called because it encapsulates this spiritual knowledge. There are hymns addressed to several gods, but the essential message is one of syncretic monotheism.

There are fifty-five *mantras* in the *Aranya Kanda*. These are divided into five sections (*khanda*). The *mantras* follow six different metres. These are *vrihati*, *trishtupa*, *jagati*, *gayatri*, *anushtupa* and *mahapamkti*.)

Aranya Kanda

O handsome Indra! You hold the *vajra* in your hand. You grant us riches and increase our prowess. Grant us the foodgrains that nourish heaven and earth. Indra is the lord of animals and men. He is the lord of all objects on earth. He grants riches to those who give alms and to those who sing his praise. Great indeed is Indra's generosity; it is famous in heaven and on earth.

O great god! Free us from bondage. O Indra! After we have prayed to you, we pray to Varuna, the son of Aditi. O Varuna! Protect us from sin and destruction.

O Pure Soma! With your aid we will triumph in battles. Let us observe the prescribed rites in righteous fashion. May Varuna, Aditi, Sindhu, the heaven and the earth grant us fame. O goddess! Grant us strength and make us successful.

O Soma! You possess great riches. We have strained you for the sacrifice. Please Indra, Mitra and Varuna for us. With Soma's help, we will obtain foodgrains. Before the gods were created, the god of foodgrains was born. (That is, this is not a specific god, but the personification of foodgrains as a god.) The god of foodgrains was born from the fire of the sacrifice. He will protect us. The god of foodgrains will devour greedy men.

O Indra! The cows are of black, red and diverse other hues. Your deeds are so wonderful that you have provided them all with white milk.

Surya is associated with Usha and Surya is the chief god. Surya is the one who blazes. The clouds are heavy with rain. They thunder. The subjects of earth are nourished with foodgrains. The gods have created the universe so that we can marvel at their power. We are born from the wombs of our mothers, created by our fathers. That is how creation flourishes.

Indra harnesses two steeds to his chariot. Indra wields the *vajra*. Indra is adorned with golden ornaments. Indra is valiant. He protects us in battles, great and small.

The great sage Vashishtha has the names Pratha and Sapratha. To him hymns are sung in the

anushtupa metre and oblations offered. The great sage Vashishtha pleased Dhata, Savita and Vishnu and obtained the name Rathantara.

O Vayu! Come to us on your chariot known as Niyuta. This bright *soma* juice has been prepared for you. Come to our house.

O Indra! You are the possessor of wonderous riches. You were created for the destruction of the demon Vritra. You made the earth great and established heaven above it.

The supreme godhead (*parameshvara*) resides in the best of places. May the supreme godhead grant me energy, fame and the milk that is used for sacrifices.

O Soma! You triumph over enemies. May there be a plentiful supply of milk with you. May there be foodgrains in your possession. May you attain immortality in heaven. O Soma! You have created the herbs, the water and the cows. You have spread the atmosphere above our heads. You have destroyed darkness.

O Agni! You reside at the place of the sacrifice and make the sacrifice a success. I bow down before you. You wear jewellery and bring the gods to the sacrifice.

The sages realised that the goddess Usha was deserving of praise. They composed twenty-one hymns in her honour. Pleased with these hymns, Usha made her radiance manifest.

The second showers of the monsoon mingle with the water of the rivers. It is this water which is mixed with *soma* juice and reaches Agni.

The woman who is the night (*ratrī*) has come to us. She is the one who makes us thrive. She makes us prosper. Her arrival signals the end of the brightness of the day. *Ratri* makes us thrive by setting the world at rest.

I pray to the Agni who is omnipresent and powerful. Our hymns are sung to Agni on the occasion of a sacrifice. These beautiful hymns are like offerings of *soma* juice. May they reach the ears of the youthful Agni. Let all the gods listen to our hymns. Let the heaven, the earth and Agni listen to my hymns. O gods! I will not chant hymns that are not deserving of your ears. May you be pleased and may you grant me happiness.

Let me attain the heaven and the earth. Let Indra and Brihaspati make me famous. Let me please the god Bhaga. May I attain fame. May I get to make speeches at assemblies (*sabha*).

I will describe the valour of Indra, the wielder of the *vajra*. He killed the demon named Ahi who was a cloud. He splintered the clouds and made water flow from them. It is this water that flowed from rivers in mountains.

I am Agni; sacred is my birth. I know all that there is to know. My eyes are the path to radiance, my mouth is the store of immortality. It is I who am the breath of life. It is I who am to be found in the atmosphere in the form of Vayu. It is I who am to be found in the energy of Surya. I am all the oblations that are offered at sacrifices.

Agni protects the earth, the atmosphere and heaven. On earth he is the protector as fire, in the atmosphere he is the protector as lightning, and in heaven he is the protector as the sun. The Maruts are nothing but Agni and lightning is also nothing but Agni. Agni is to be found at the place of a sacrifice. Through the sacrificial offerings, Agni protects the gods.

O flaming Agni! Your blazing mouth and your fiery tongue devour the oblations. You are the lord of riches. Grant me wealth in the form of milk and foodgrains. Grant me energy.

Spring (*vasanta*) is a beautiful season, summer (*grishma*) is also beautiful. In fact, the other seasons, monsoon (*varsha*), early autumn (*sharad*), late autumn (*hemanta*) and winter (*shishira*), are also beautiful.

There is a being with a thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet. He surrounds the earth from all directions, he surrounds the universe from all directions, and yet there is more of him that is left over. This being is divided into four parts. Three of these parts exist in lofty places and the fourth part is manifested on earth. This fourth part embraces the four directions on earth. All beings who have been born and all beings who will be born are manifestations of this being. Three parts of the being are immortal and exist in heaven, and the fourth part sustains all objects on earth. This being is the lord of immortality and of foodgrains. He is supreme; he is the one who created the earth.

O heaven and earth! These are the two regions (*lokas*) that grant us foodgrains. Grant us unlimited riches and make us prosper. Free us from all sin.

O Indra! Your moustache has become green as a result of drinking the green *soma* juice. Your steeds number two and are yellow of hue. You nourish all the excellent cows and you are truly learned. We pray to you.

I merge into the energy that is to be found in gold, into the energy that is to be found in cows, and into the energy that is to be found in true knowledge.

O Indra! You rule over myriad riches. Grant us power and strength. It is within your powers to grant us these. Make our sacrifice a success. Let us triumph over our enemies in battle.

O cows! You live with bullocks and calves, you are overflowing with milk. Many are the forms that you can take. Come to us. May this earth make you prosper. Let the waters flow so as to quench your thirst.

O Agni! Grant us a long life. Grant us strength and foodgrains. May the demons maintain their distance from us.

O radiant Surya! Drink your fill of the *soma* juice. It is Surya who combines with Vayu to protect all the subjects on earth. It is Surya who makes the foodgrains grow. O Surya! Let those who perform sacrifices thrive. Let them have long lives and let them be righteous. The rising sun has in him the energy of

all the gods. The eyes of Mītra, Varuna and Agni are to be found in Surya. As soon as the sun rises, the heaven, the atmosphere, and the earth are flooded with light. Surya is like the soul of the universe.

As soon as Surya rises, he first touches the earth. The earth is like his mother. Later, Surya ascends to heaven and the heaven is like Surya's father. The sun's rays spread throughout the sky. Until the time of sunset, Surya's rays light up heaven.

Every day is divided into thirty *muhurtas* (unit of time). It is because Surya lights up the universe with his rays that he is to be worshipped. As soon as the sun rises, the stars and the night which comes with them, disappear. The sun's rays are like the flames of a fire that has been lit. O Surya! You will bring all of us deliverance. You are the lord of this earth, since you are the one who lights it up.

O Surya! You are the purifier. You are the one who nurtures all living beings. We bow down before your radiance. You are the one who traverses the atmosphere and heaven. Seven pure horses are harnessed to Surya's chariot. These seven rays purify us.

O supreme god! You are omniscient, you know the righteous path. Guide us along proper paths, grant us wisdom. You are the originator of the primeval energy, you are the lord of prosperity. You are the one who gives us our senses.

O Indra! Make this earth overflow with energy and foodgrains. You are strong, you are the wielder of the

vajra. Grant us wealth, strength and foodgrains. Come to us and drink this *soma* juice. Make your devotees strong and show us the way to attain prosperity. You are learned and radiant, you are the lord of all wealth. Guide us along the path to true knowledge. Those who pray to you attain the supreme knowledge. We pray to you for protection against our foes. You are the protector of the righteous. Manifest yourself amongst us so that we may attain bliss.

O Indra! You are the destroyer of the demon Vritra. The best of men pray to you.

O Agni! O Pusha! O other gods! We pray to all of you for sustenance.

(This concludes the *Aranya Kanda* of the *Sama Veda Samhita* and also concludes the *Purvarchika* section.

We now move on to the *Uttararchika* section.

There are twenty-one chapters (*adhyaya*) in *Uttararchika*. A chapter is sometimes divided into *khandas* (sections). There are one thousand two hundred and twenty-five *mantras* in *Uttararchika*. The gods to whom these *mantras* are addressed include Soma, Agni, Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Usha, the Ashvinis, the Maruts, the Vishvadevas, Surya, Sarasvati, Savita, Brahmanaspati, Vishvakarma, Pusha, Dyavapriithivi, Vishnu, Vayu, Brihaspati and the Adityas in general. Amongst the metres which are used are *gayatri*, *vrihati*, *trishtupa*, *kakupa*, *ushnika*, *anushtupa* and *jagati*. These constitute the seven basic metres, although variations and combinations are also used.)

UTTARARCHIKA

Listen to me, all those who wish to perform a sacrifice. If you wish to offer oblations to the gods, first pray to the pure *soma* juice. The sages who were learned in the *Atharva Veda* mixed *soma* juice with sweet milk for Indra.

O Soma, bringer of energy! Make our cattle and our descendants prosper. Make our horses and herbs prosper. May you be purified through the process of straining. The *soma* juice gives us strength; it is praised through the chanting of hymns. It is mixed with the milk of cows.

O Soma! You know all that there is to be known. Your glory rivals that of Surya. You are strained for the welfare of all mankind. You are the storehouse of all wisdom. Like a horse dashing out of a stable, your flow gushes into the pots used for straining. We strain the sweet *soma* juice into pots with strainers made of goat-hair. Water is mixed with the sacred juice.

O Agni! We are praying to you. Listen to our prayers and devour these offerings. Carry these offerings to the gods. Come to our sacrifice, be seated on the throne we have reserved for you and summon the gods to the sacrifice. O Agni! You are handsome. You are youthful. We light you with kindlings and clarified butter. Burn gloriously. May your fame spread.

O Mitra and Varuna! May our cows be full of clarified butter. May we have a plentiful supply of sweet foodgrains. You are the ones who are pure of

heart. You are the ones who accept oblations and are pleased with hymns. Great is your strength and glory. O Mitra and Varuna! It is to you that the sage Jamadagni prayed. Come and be seated at our sacrifice. Make the sacrifice a success. Drink the *soma* juice we have offered.

O Indra! Come hither. The *soma* juice has been prepared for you. Drink it and be seated. As we chant these hymns, may your two steeds bring you here. Listen to the hymns we are singing for your benefit. It is for you that the priests have extracted the *soma* juice; it is for you that the *mantras* are being chanted.

O Indra and Agni! The *soma* herb grows in the loftiests of mountain peaks. It has been gathered for you. Come and drink the *soma* juice. You are the ones who help those who perform sacrifices. Drink the *soma* juice that provides nourishment and increases one's enthusiasm. I acknowledge the supreme gods, Indra and Agni. Let them grant me the fruits of this sacrifice. Let them be satiated with the *soma* juice I have offered.

O Soma! You are like food. You were born in lofty heaven. You increase our valour, you grant us happiness, you are to be found on earth in the form of foodgrains. You are the one who grants us prosperity. We have strained you for the sake of Indra, Varuna and the Maruts. O Soma! We pray to you so that we may obtain the riches that mankind is entitled to. Let the *soma* juice be strained and mixed with water. Let it sparkle in our vessels. Let *soma* juice flow at our sacrifice.

Soma juice is sweet and loved by the gods. It has been extracted on the occasion of the sacrifice, the officiating priests have strained the juice. Wonderful is the sacrifice at which *soma* juice is offered. O *Soma*! Flow swiftly into our pots; may we strain you and offer you as an oblation. You are our protector and you are the one who banishes our enemies. You are the one who gives heaven and earth form and creates the gods. You are the fount of all wisdom. It is to you that the learned sage Ushana prayed.

O Indra! Come to us the way a mother cow goes to her calf. You are the lord of all that is mobile and all that is immobile in the universe. We pray to Indra, the lord of prosperity. There is no one who can equal you, on heaven or on earth. Nor will there ever be an entity that can rival you. You are the one who grants us horses, you are the one who grants us cattle, you are the one who grants us wealth. Be like a true friend unto us. O Indra! Grant us strength and be our protector. Make us tread along the righteous path and grant us happiness. We revere the *soma* juice because it gives you pleasure.

O Indra! You protect your devotees. That is the reason we are praying to you. We chant hymns in your honour. We pray to the Indra who resides in heaven so that our desires may be satisfied. May we obtain food, wealth, cows and gifts. Listen to me, all of you who are desirous of performing a sacrifice. Sing *sama* hymns composed in the *vrihati* metre for Indra. Let him come to our aid. Indra does not have an equal in battle, be it among the gods or among the demons.

O Soma! We have purified and strained you so that you may please Indra. The strained *soma* juice has flowed into vessels made of gold. The *soma* juice will grant us riches; it will destroy our powerful enemies. O Soma! Great is your energy and your sweetness. Let Indra drink the *soma* juice and become stronger still. Look at the sparkling *soma* juice flow. Look at its green hue. May it slake Indra's thirst.

The *soma* juice should be drunk at the time of battle. It is after drinking the *soma* juice that Indra grasps his bow and wields his *vajra*. O friends! Your victory is certain now that the *soma* juice has started to flow. It is the *soma* juice which makes sacrifices successful. But let not long-tongued dogs get close to the vessels of *soma*. *Soma* juice purifies the water with which it is mixed; *soma* juice rides on Surya's chariot. *Soma* is omniscient; it makes the heaven manifest. Hear the ripple of the *soma* juice flow as the officiating priests chant their hymns.

Listen to me, those of you who wish to perform a sacrifice. Pray to the radiant Agni on the occasion of every sacrifice. Agni is learned and immortal. Let us welcome him like a dear friend. We pray to Agni so that our powers may increase, we pray to Agni so that our welfare may be ensured. Agni protects us in the course of battle and Agni carries our oblations to the gods. Let Agni increase our wisdom. Let Agni make our physical bodies thrive.

O Agni! Come hither. Listen to the beautiful hymns we are chanting for your sake. You will grant us strength, you will grant us dwelling-houses. O Agni!

Your radiance will not harm our eyes, you are the lord of all mankind. Accept our offerings.

O Indra! You are the wielder of the wonderful *vajra*. We are offering you *soma* juice as we crave for your protection. Come to us, you who are the conqueror of all your enemies. You are youthful and valiant. Everyone knows that we wish you to be our friend. You are indeed deserving of praise. Like the rivers flow into the ocean and make it great, may our hymns increase your greatness. Let our hymns be like steeds for Indra's chariot.

Indra is the drinker of the *soma* juice, Indra is the conqueror of all his enemies, Indra is the performer of countless wonderful deeds. Sing Indra's praise. Many are those who call upon Indra to obtain his benediction. Indra's fame has been known from time immemorial. The great Indra will come to us and grant us riches and foodgrains. O friends! Sing hymns so that Indra, the keeper of steeds, may be pleased. O Indra! Grant us cows and grant us gold. Those who are descended from the sage Kanva are asking for your blessings.

The gods love those who offer *soma* juice at sacrifices. The gods are not fond of the lazy. They are pleased at the effort of *soma* juice being extracted for them. Let our *soma* juice please Indra's heart. Let our hymns please Indra's ears. We praise Indra, in whom can be found all the beauties of the universe. The sacrifice will go on for three days. And the gods will grace the sacrifice by their presence.

O Indra! Come and drink the *soma* juice that has been reserved for you. May it please you and may your myriad rays bless your worshippers. This sacrifice is called *kundapayya*. (At a *kundapayya* sacrifice, *soma* was drunk from large vessels.) Do not restrict your rays, but let them brighten up the sacrifice. O Indra! Long indeed are your arms. Bring a lot of riches for us in your right hand. We are cognisant of your power, grant us protection, O vallant one! There is no one among gods or men who can vanquish you. There is no one who can match up to the strength of your bulls.

O Indra! Let the *soma* juice please and satiate you. Let not those who scorn you, flourish. Aid not those who have hatred in their hearts. The officiating priests have mixed the *soma* juice with milk. Like a thirsty deer hastening to a pond, come here and slake your thirst. The *soma* juice is like food for you. Come and satisfy your hunger. The *soma* herbs have been crushed with stones. The juice has been strained in strainers made of goat-hair. The priests have purified the juice. They have mixed it with sweetened milk. Come and drink the *soma* juice. Let it be like cakes (*purodasha*) for you.

Let the *soma* juice course through Indra's armpits, let it flow through his head, let it fill the pores of his body. O friends! Sing *soma* hymns in Indra's praise. Indra will guide us in our righteous deeds. He will grant us wealth, foodgrains and wisdom. Indra is the powerful one. He is to be worshipped before embarking on any task or before setting out to do

battle. If Indra listens to our prayers, he will bring us protection. O Indra! It is you who bless our *soma* juice. It is you who bless our hymns. Magnificent is your greatness. We call upon the Indra who manifests himself in the dwelling-houses of the gods in the sky. We call upon the Indra who delivers us from unhappiness. We call upon the Indra who conquers demons. Let Indra be like a friend unto us and let him grace our sacrifice.

O Agni! You are immortal. It is to you that we are praying through these hymns. You give us our strength and our senses. You make our sacrifices successful. It is you who are our messenger to the gods. Agni is radiant. The steeds that are harnessed to his chariot devour everything. Let Agni's flames blaze with our sacrificial offerings. The learned Agni will bring the gods to our sacrifice.

Usha is heaven's daughter. See how she appears and destroys the darkness. Close on Usha's heels comes Surya with his myriad rays. O Usha! After you and Surya appear, let us have a plentiful supply of foodgrains.

O Ashvinis! Your subjects are praying to you. Come to their aid. Use your powers to protect those who are praying to you. You give us inspiration, you provide us with an abundant supply of foodgrains. Drive your chariot to our sacrifice and stop here. Drink the *soma* juice we have offered to you.

The *soma* juice is prepared by the learned. It fulfils all one's desires. It increases our wisdom. *Soma* juice

flows in heaven in seven distinct flows; it is strained into pots filled with water. The sacred *soma* juice fills the earth with the radiance of the sun. Green is its hue and it has been extracted for the sake of the gods. The *brahmanas* have prepared the *soma* juice to the chanting of sacred hymns. First the *soma* juice has to be extracted, next it has to be strained. O Soma! Frighten away our enemies and grant us riches. Let the extracted *soma* juice be mixed with water. Let it be mixed with the milk of cows. The gods will come to drink the *soma* juice. Sing hymns in praise of *soma* juice.

Soma juice mixed with water increases our wisdom. The *soma* juice enables us to attain gods like Indra, Vayu, the Maruts and Vishnu. Mix the *soma* juice with water, mix it with milk. Keep the sweetened *soma* juice in vessels for the gods. The clear *soma* juice is like a beloved son to us. Let it be mixed with water. The *soma* juice will increase our happiness. It will increase our wisdom. The sage Trita crushed *soma* herbs with his own hands so that offerings could be made to Indra. May *soma* juice grant us brave sons. It is like food for us. Let not harsh words be used about the *soma* juice. Let dogs be kept away from the *soma* juice. Let us follow the sage Bhrigu, who did not permit dogs to come near his sacrifices.

O Soma! You are the prime god. Listen to our hymns and use your strength to protect us. You are omniscient. May our praise enable you to attain the waters of the atmosphere. O Soma! It is because of your greatness that the earth stands still. It is because

of your greatness that cows provide milk. The *soma* juice has been extracted and strained. It increases our energy and fame. It destroys our enemies. O Soma! We desire that you may be our friend. With you by our side, we will vanquish all our enemies.

O Soma! You use your terrible and sharp weapons to destroy your enemies. Protect us from the depredations of our enemies. O Soma! You are brave and powerful. You fulfil all our desires. You increase our strength and nurture righteousness. O god! Great is your influence. Your juice multiplies our strength. O Soma! You grant us cows and horses and riches. We call upon the pure *soma* juice to increase our energies.

O Soma! You have been purified by the officiating priests. You have been mixed with water and placed in pots. Many are your weapons. You grant us valour and happiness. Be present at our sacrifice. We desire that the strained *soma* juice may befriend us. Let the ripples of the *soma* juice banish our miseries. O Soma! You are the lord of all that there is. Grant us food, riches, sons and grandsons.

We pray to Agni. He is the one who summons the gods to the sacrifice. He is the one who is the possessor of all wealth. He is the one who will make the sacrifice a success. He is the one who will carry our oblations to the gods. Agni is the protector of all his subjects. We pray to Agni through our hymns. O Agni! You are obtained by rubbing two sticks (*arani*) together. Help us by summoning the gods to our sacrifice.

We call upon Mitra and Varuna. They are sacred and strong. Let them come to our sacrifice. Mitra and

Varuna are the preservers of all that is true. They are the fount of all energy. May Mitra and Varuna protect us and grant us riches.

Indra has been praised through *sama* hymns composed in the *vrihati* metre. We have spoken of his glory through our *mantras* and hymns. Indra is the wielder of the *vajra*. Golden are his ornaments. Wonderful steeds are harnessed to his chariot. O Indra! You are valiant and the provider of countless riches. Protect us in battle. It is Indra who has placed the sun in heaven. It is Indra who sends the clouds. We crave protection and riches from Indra and Agni. All amongst us who are learned, pray to the two great gods.

O Soma! You grant us prowess. May you please Indra, the companion of the Maruts. O Soma! You are the bearer of Dyavaprithivi. You are the one who manifests to us the great soul. Let me strain your green juice with my fingers. May you go into battle. May you send Indra into battle. Your noise is like the sound made by a red-hued bull. You attain heaven and earth. Your roar can be heard above all the other sounds of battle. Listen to our hymns and reveal yourself to us. The sweetened *soma* juice becomes even more sweet when it is mixed with the milk of cows. The juice is mixed with water and strained so that it may please Indra. Inspire us, O Soma! Inspire the clouds that were released after the demon Vritra was killed. Flow in all the four directions that surround us.

O Indra! We call upon you to provide us with foodgrains. We call upon you to protect the best

amongst men. We call upon you when our enemies are created. Come to the aid of our horses in battle. You wield the *vajra*, you dwell in the mountains, you are the one who is truly valiant. Your greatness knows no bounds as you vanquish your enemies. A victorious warrior obtains horses and other objects. Like that, after we have prayed to you, grant us cows, horses and chariots.

Indra is the possessor of many riches. He grants wealth to those who pray to him. Worship Indra. Indra kills the enemies of those who give alms. Gifts please Indra like the waters of the mountains please a thirsty person. O wielder of the *vajra*! The officiating priests offer you *soma* juice from the first day of the sacrifice. Listen to the hymns that are being sung to you. Come and be present at the sacrifice. You wear a handsome helmet, you rule over steeds, and you alone are deserving of worship. Be satiated with the *soma* juice. After the offerings of *soma* juice, foodgrains are also offered to you.

O Soma! Your strained juice is fit to be served to the gods. It grants supreme bliss and destroys evil demons. It is you who accompany us in battle. It is you who grant us horses and cows. The *soma* juice glistens after it is mixed with the milk of cows. *Soma* juice is the nourisher of all living beings. Its radiance dazzles in heaven and on earth. May we have a plentiful supply of the pure *soma* juice. May it increase our strength and intelligence. *Soma* juice increases the energy of Usha, of the day and of heaven. *Soma* juice is like the life force of rivers. It is praised by the learned and enters straight into Indra's heart.

O Soma! You are learned. You have been strained by the officiating priests and poured into pots. The sweetened *soma* juice increases Indra's fame throughout the three worlds. Let the *soma* juice mingle with the air in the pots. May it make Indra our friend. *Soma* juice makes Usha manifest for the welfare of mankind. *Soma* juice makes the rivers flow. Twenty-one cows have been milked so that their milk may be mixed with the *soma* juice in the prescribed fashion.

O Indra! You are unmoved in battle and protect the valiant. Grant us riches since you are the lord of all wealth. You are the one who transports our oblations to the gods. Do not be as lazy as an idle *brahmana*. But drink the *soma* juice which has been mixed with milk and then give us foodgrains and strength. You are the protector of the righteous. All hymns sing of the glory of Indra. All hymns describe his fame, which is as great as the expanse of the ocean. O Indra! Your friendship will bring us courage. From time immemorial Indra has been worshipped by men.

The *soma* juice is strained for obtaining wealth. It grants us strength and destroys sins. It gives us sons, grandsons, cows and horses. It increases our wealth and makes our cows thrive. It is for these reasons that the *soma* juice is praised. When men perform a sacrifice, the hymns that are sung bring down the pure *soma* juice from the atmosphere and make it flow into pots. *Soma* juice is strained so that it may be offered to the gods.

O Soma! Grant us a hundred cows, beautiful horses and good fortune. Many are the riches you possess in

heaven. We wish for your presence at this august sacrifice. We desire the gift of riches from one who has destroyed powerful enemies and from one who has performed many wonderful deeds. May Soma give us happiness and wealth.

Soma herbs were brought down to earth from heaven by the great bird Garuda. Let learned priests crush the herbs and strain the juice. May the juice be mixed with the milk of cows. Green is the colour of the *soma* juice. May the juice be purified and offered to the gods. May it satisfy Indra.

Agni has a mouth named Juhu. The youthful Agni protects the place where the sacrifice is held. Agni carries our oblations to the gods. O Agni! Please be our messenger and carry our words to the gods. Protect the officiating priests. You are the one who purifies and we are worshipping you.

I call upon the two great gods Mitra and Varuna. May they destroy our enemies with hatred in their hearts. Mitra and Varuna make righteous sacrifices flourish. May they bless this sacrifice with the light of truth. Mitra and Varuna will bring success to our endeavours; they will grant us strength. They are the ones who live in several places; they are the ones who perform wonderful deeds.

O powerful Maruts! You are the handsome companions of the indomitable Indra. The Maruts are worthy of worship.

I call upon Indra and Agni for aid. Those who pray to them never come to grief. Agni and Indra destroy

all enemies, no matter how powerful. They banish those with hatred in their hearts. They protect the righteous.

Priests who are clever happily strain the *soma* juice. Purified *soma* juice is mixed with water in pots. The *soma* juice is extracted for the sake of Mitra and Varuna. It is strained and mixed with water for the sake of Indra. *Soma* juice is prepared to the chanting of hymns from the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda*. Cows that yield milk desire that *soma* juice may be mixed with their milk. The learned wish to describe the properties of *soma* juice. *Soma* is praised through hymns composed in the *trishṭupa* metre. O *Soma*! You will bring us welfare.

O Indra! You are the wielder of the *vajra*. There is no one who is your equal in heaven or on earth. You would be unrivalled even if there were to be a hundred heavens, a hundred earths and a thousand suns. Indra fulfils everyone through his power. Indra is strong; he is always victorious. O Indra! Protect us and protect the cows in our cowsheds. We have prepared *soma* juice for you; you will kill our enemies. The officiating priests chant your praise. When will Indra come to our sacrifice?

When the sage Kanva prayed to Indra, Indra granted him strength and many riches. The learned Indra will also grant us riches. He will remedy the miseries of all those who are performing this sacrifice. O Indra! We pray to you for riches.

Hymns are being chanted from the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda*. The officiating priests

have assembled the cows that will yield milk. Green *soma* juice has been strained into pots. *Soma* is like the son of heaven. Hymns from the *Vedas* are being chanted on the occasion of the sacrifice.

O Soma! Bring a wealth of riches to us from all the four directions. Please make sure that our wishes are granted. Sweet is the *soma* juice when it is strained into pots for Indra. This drink which brings bliss will be offered to the gods. *Soma* is used on the occasion of a sacrifice as Soma is the one who will protect and preserve all our hymns. Soma is Indra's friend. Let *soma* juice be strained into pots in a thousand flows. Soma is the lord of all hymns. Let pure *soma* juice course through the veins of all those who drink it.

At the stroke of dawn, the sun makes himself manifest. His rays make rain sprinkle in all the worlds. It is his rays that nourish foodgrains. The gods use the rays of the sun to create the universe. The sun uses the energy of the *soma* juice to make the herbs (*oshadhi*) thrive.

Listen to me, those who wish to perform a sacrifice. Chant Agni's praise. The radiant Agni will bring us fame through our sons. Let Agni be close to us in our food.

O Indra! We praise the *soma* juice. It is that which satiates you, it is that which makes you invincible in battle. It is that which makes your steeds beautiful and it is that which enables you to work towards the welfare of the universe. O Indra! Please come and attend our sacrifice. Please inspire us the way the sun

inspires all the elements of this world. O Indra! Your devotees worship you today as they have done from time immemorial. You are indeed great. Grant us sons, cows and riches. Give us the intelligence that makes the mind pure. We have composed new hymns for you, even though the rites of the sacrifice may be old. We pray to the Indra who is exalted through these hymns. Our devotion describes his glory.

O Soma! The milk of cows is divine. It has been used to fill the pots. Learned sages have extracted and strained the *soma* juice. Let it be mixed with the milk. Green is the hue of the purified *soma* juice as it flows into the pots. Soma sees everything, his rays reach the remotest corners of the universe. O Soma! Your qualities will make righteousness flourish. You are the lord of the universe.

Pure *soma* juice makes Agni blaze as lightning. The energy of *soma* juice increases our enthusiasm and makes the demons cower. The demons do not get to drink *soma* juice. *Soma* juice is strained through strainers made of goat-hair. I praise the *soma* juice that is strained into pots, the residual black sediment does not get to enter the pots. We will vanquish evil enemies with the aid of the *soma* juice. *Soma* juice brings us happiness. The sound of *soma* juice being strained is like the sound of rain. The rays of *soma* juice light up the sky. O Soma! Grant us foodgrains, cows, gold, horses, sons and grandsons. Let *soma* juice be purified. Let it fill up heaven and earth like the rays of the sun. Just as the water surrounds the earth, let *soma* juice surround all our four directions.

O Soma! Please be present at the sacrifices that are frequented by the gods. Descend to us from heaven and purify places that have not been sanctified. It is the *soma* juice that is found in heaven which is strained here on earth. It is that which is mixed with water. The strained *soma* juice is like the life force of all objects that exist. Let the sweetened and purified *soma* juice be offered to Indra. The green *soma* herbs are crushed with stones. After that, we assemble to sing of the glory of *soma* juice. The husbands who are the best extract the *soma* juice. Sibling sisters extract the *soma* juice together. *Soma* juice is everywhere. It shines with energy. *Soma* juice is offered to the gods, but let it grant us riches. O Soma! You come to us like the blessings of the gods. You shower us with rain so that foodgrains may grow

Agni preserves us, Agni encourages the performance of righteous deeds. Agni manifests himself so that the welfare of living beings might be achieved. The flames of the fire-god rise up as offerings of clarified butter are made. They reach as high as heaven. Agni is the purifier. Agni is present so that the sacrifice may be a success.

O Agni! You were attained by the sage Angirasa. You are created through the rubbing together of two sticks. O Agni! You are known as the offspring of prowess. The officiating priests first erect the flags on the occasion of the sacrifice. They then light a fire in three places. It is Agni who will carry our oblations to the gods. Agni has to be apportioned a seat for the sacrifice

O Mitra and Varuna! You ensure the success of the sacrifice. We have extracted and strained the *soma* juice for you. Listen to our prayers. You are full of energy and are free of all hatred. You are constant and supreme. The pavilion erected for the sacrifice has a thousand pillars. Come and be seated here. Offerings of clarified butter are made to Mitra and Varuna. They are the lords of all wealth; they are the sons of Aditi. Mitra and Varuna aid devotees who are pure of heart.

Indra has no enemies. The *vajra* was created from the bones of the sage Dadhichi. Indra used the *vajra* to kill the demon Vritra. The head of the horse was in the mountains, next to the lake Sharyanavati. Indra was desirous of obtaining the horse's head and did manage to get it. He killed the demons with its aid. (This allusion to the head of a horse makes no sense unless one knows the related story. Indra imparted to the sage Dadhichi some specialised knowledge and told the sage that if this knowledge was divulged to others, Dadhichi's head would fall off. Dadhichi taught this knowledge to the two Ashvinis, and immediately his head fell off. The two Ashvinis stuck a horse's head to the sage's torso and revived Dadhichi. Hearing of this, Indra beheaded the sage. The horse's head was severed. Subsequently, the Ashvinis stuck Dadhichi's old head back onto his torso.)

During the night, the rays of the sun are to be found in the light of the moon. So it has been said.

O Indra and Agni! Like rain flowing out from clouds, hymns in your praise flow out from the mouths of the learned. Listen to the hymns and bring success to those who pray to you. You are our leaders; deliver us from temptation. Make us free of hatred and calumny.

Green is the *soma* juice which inspires everyone. It is extracted for Vayu, the Maruts and the other gods. Purified *soma* juice always finds a place with the gods. When *soma* juice is strained into pots, it attains the god Vayu. We crave the friendship of Soma, day after day. Let *soma* juice destroy the demons who oppress me.

Brown is the colour of the *soma* juice. Let its energy be by my side, night and day. Let sacred *soma* juice be praised by the officiating priests. Golden is the colour of *soma* juice when it is strained into pots. The powerful Indra will drink the *soma* juice. O Soma! Quickly bring us immense riches from the four directions.

O Indra! Drink the *soma* juice. May it satisfy you. You are the possessor of many steeds; may the *soma* juice that we have extracted please you as much as your steeds do. O Indra! Your horse is named Hari. You partook of the *soma* juice and killed the demon Vritra. You are the lord of all riches. Hearken to the prayers of the sage Vashishtha. Let us all combine to sing the praise of the invincible Indra. Wonderful are the deeds that Indra performed. He killed all his powerful enemies.

The first god that the officiating priests see is Indra. It is to Indra that the first hymns are addressed. Let the hymns be such that they reach Indra's ears. The priests summon Indra to drink the *soma* juice. Indra is the ruler of heaven, he will offer protection to his devotees. Indra is the king of men, he is the one who rides in a chariot. Indra triumphs over all his enemies. Pray to Indra so that he may protect you. He holds the *vajra* in his hand, the flaming *vajra* which rivals the radiant sun.

Soma juice originated in heaven, but it is obtained on earth by crushing *soma* herbs. Learned are those who know how to accomplish this task. *Soma* makes the sacrifice a success; he is the son of heaven. O *Soma*! May those who pray to you with purity in their hearts attain you. *Soma* is divine, may *soma* juice fast attain immortality.

The sage Dadhyanda possessed many new cows. He used *soma* juice to make his sacrifice a success. *Brahmanas* who performed sacrifices with the aid of *soma* juice, obtained cows. *Soma* juice brings bliss to the gods on the occasion of a sacrifice. *Soma* juice is strained with strainers made of the hair of sheep. (Earlier, it has always been goat-hair.) With the chanting of hymns, pure *soma* juice flows into the pots. Hear the sound of the *soma* juice being strained. Mix the pure juice with water. *Soma* is the originator of all hymns. He made the heaven manifest. He is the father of the world. *Soma* is also the creator of Agni, Surya, Indra and Vishnu.

Brahma is supreme among gods. (This is not the god Brahma, regarded as the creator in the epics and the *Puranas*. In this context, the word *brahma* probably signifies a title conferred on a poet.) One who is facile with words is supreme among poets. A sage (*rishi*) is supreme among *brahmanas*. A buffalo is supreme among animals and a falcon is supreme among birds. But purified *soma* juice is superior to them all. The sound of *soma* juice being strained is like the sound of rivers. *Soma* juice pleases the heart. May it be mixed with the milk of cows.

O officiating priests! Pray to the powerful Agni. Agni will bring fame to all our deeds. Agni brings prosperity to all the gods. Let Agni bring us foodgrains.

O Indra! Come and drink the *soma* juice. It will gladden your heart. Indra harnesses wonderful steeds to his chariot, he is unrivalled in battle. There is no one who possesses horses as handsome as the ones that Indra has. O officiating priests! You must pray to Indra, you must recite hymns to him. Offer him purified *soma* juice. O Indra! Come and accept our oblations. May these please you; may the sweet *soma* juice please you. May you obtain the happiness that can only be obtained in heaven.

O Soma! You are the one who possesses cows, riches, gold and valour. You are our leader, valiant and learned. The priests are chanting hymns in your praise. Pure *soma* juice brings men strength. *Soma* juice will bring us long lives, gold and wealth. O Soma! You harness your green steeds to your chariot

and traverse the universe. Your sweet juice is strained and mixed with water. Those who perform a sacrifice wish to obtain your friendship.

O Soma! You are omniscient. Your flow is like the rays of the sun. You bring us wisdom and wealth. Your trail can be seen in the atmosphere. Milk is mixed with the purified *soma* juice. May Indra drink the *soma* juice and be inspired. *Soma* juice be praised.

Soma juice needs to be offered to the gods. It must be strained in strainers made of sheep-hair. *Soma* juice destroys our enemies, it kills all sinners. *Soma* juice will bring us cows and foodgrains. *Soma* juice will increase our intelligence. It will bring us fame. *Soma* juice is as wonderful as a king with a pure heart. O Soma! Hearken to our prayers. Grant your devotees success in the sacrifice and valour. Come and be seated on the occasion of the sacrifice. Give us cows, horses and foodgrains. May your countless enemies be vanquished. May you offer us protection. The tasty *soma* juice has been prepared for Indra. O Soma! The sage Angira is praying to you; grant him milk and riches.

O Agni! You devour trees and shrubs with your tongue. Your rays can be likened to lightning during the monsoon. They can also be likened to the sun at the time of dawn. O Agni! Your flames are stirred by the wind; they burn everything to ashes. You are always young. You increase our intelligence. It is you who summon the gods to the sacrifice. We pray to Agni so that we may triumph over our enemies. O Agni! Come and partake of the oblations we have offered. There is no other god to whom we shall pray.

O Mitra and Varuna! You will certainly offer us protection. Grant us wisdom so that we may be devoted to you. We are reciting hymns to you so that we may be free of all hatred. Make us your friends and grant us foodgrains. Protect us well and make us flourish. May we vanquish all our enemies.

O Indra! The vessels are full of *soma* juice; come and drink it. You are the destroyer of all your enemies. Heaven and earth are thrilled when you are pleased. O Indra! My hymn to you may be short; it consists of only eight lines. But it is a new hymn. Pray listen to it.

O Indra and Agni! Devotees are reciting hymns to you. Drink the *soma* juice and bring us happiness. You are our leaders. You are the ones who shower us with gifts. We are calling upon you for aid; come to us on your horses. The pure *soma* juice has been prepared for your sake.

O Soma! Your powerful juice is stored in wooden containers. It is strained and mixed with water so that it may be offered to Indra, Vayu, Varuna, Vishnu and the Maruts. O Soma! Give us foodgrains for our sons, give us countless riches from all the four directions. The priests crush the *soma* herbs, they strain the juice in strainers made of sheep-hair. Green is the hue of the strained *soma* juice as it pours into pots. The juice brings great happiness. Purified *soma* juice is mixed with the milk of cows. It flows into the pots like rivers flowing into the sea. O Soma! Bring us riches and bring us fame. May those who pray to you attain long lives.

O Soma and Indra! The two of you are the lords of all objects. You are the lords of herds of cattle. Grant us wisdom.

The officiating priests praise Indra, the destroyer of the demon Vritra. They crave for his protection, in battles great and small. O brave Indra! You are a warrior. You are the one who plunders the riches of the enemies. You are the one who makes small men great. You are the lord of all riches, we pray to you so that you may grant us riches.

O Indra! The time of battle is nigh. Harness your brave steeds to your chariot. Decide on who is to win this battle. Bring riches to the victorious. The *soma* juice that is offered at sacrifices is drunk by cows that are as white as milk. (The implication probably is that *soma* juice is mixed with milk.) These cows are owned by Indra. When Indra is pleased, there will be many milk-yielding cows in our kingdom. The cows that are beloved by Indra will inspire his *vajra*. It is Indra's volour that becomes manifest in the milk of cows.

Soma dwells in the mountains. *Soma* juice is purified and mixed with clear water by the officiating priests. It is made tasty by mixing it with milk, to be offered to the gods. *Soma* juice confers immortality. It is desired by the gods. *Soma* juice is the lord of all prosperity. May it reside in our pots of honey.

Great is the strength of *soma* juice. It rules over all subjects the way a king rules over a kingdom. Like water flowing down from heaven, *soma* juice flows into the pots when the priests perform the straining.

Soma juice is like the life of a sacrifice. It is greater than all the oblations that are offered on the occasion of a sacrifice. *Soma* juice is the bridge between earth and heaven.

There was a cave in a valley. It was there that the sage Trita obtained the *soma* herb. Priests began to chant *Soma's* praise in all the seven metres. O *Soma*! May the *soma* hymns please you. May you bless Trita in all the three worlds and may you bring Indra down to his sacrifice. The officiating priests are indeed chanting Indra's praise through their hymns. We will sweeten the *soma* juice and offer it not only to Indra, but to Vishnu and the other gods as well.

O pure *soma* juice! We who have no hatred in our hearts crush the *soma* herbs with our fingers and extract the green juice. You are the one who bears aloft heaven and earth; you will grace our sacrifice. You are like an armour that confers greatness. The *soma* juice is strained so that it may inspire Indra. It brings riches to devotees, destroys demons, and oppresses all enemies. The *soma* herbs are crushed with stones. The juice is strained in strainers made of sheep-hair. May the energy of the *soma* juice satiate all the gods.

O Agni! You are always young and always full of energy. We have ensured that your flames blaze high. When your radiance reaches lofty heaven, grant us an abundance of foodgrains. You are the one who brings happiness. You are the one who destroys enemies. You are the one who protects all subjects. O radiant Agni! Oblations are offered to you to the

chanting of hymns. Grant your devotees an abundant supply of foodgrains.

O resplendent Agni! You are the lord of all strength. May our hymns please you.

Listen to me, all of you who are chanting hymns. Chant hymns in praise of the great and learned Indra. Chant *sama* hymns that have been composed in the *vrihati* metre. O Indra! You triumph over all enemies; you are the one who made the sun manifest, and you are the one who performs all deeds. You are supreme among all the gods. All the gods desire your friendship. The *soma* juice has been prepared for you, come and drink it. May it make you as radiant as the sun. O Indra! Ascend your chariot. Our *mantras* have harnessed your two steeds to the chariot. Come to us on your chariot. May your mind be attracted towards us. The hymns chanted by the priests will bring Indra to the sacrifice.

O Soma! You are the one who makes the sacrifice a success. You are the one who is beloved by the gods. You are the one who is the lord of all wealth. You are the one who provides inspiration and happiness. Many are the riches that are hidden in heaven and earth. Soma brings these to his devotees.

Soma is the lord of heaven. *Soma* juice brings wisdom and intelligence. Green is the juice when it is strained in a thousand flows. Hear the beauteous noise as the juice is strained into pots and mixed with water. Strainers made of hair purify the *soma* juice. Our hymns praise the *soma* juice. Our priests crush the

soma herbs. They pray to Soma so that we may obtain power and riches. *Soma* juice will give us cows, horses and sons. All the riches that are there in heaven, in the atmosphere and on earth will be obtained by those who worship Soma.

O Soma! We crave the proximity of the gods. Bring them to us and increase Indra's strength. Be seated at the place that has been reserved for you on the occasion of the sacrifice. Grant us foodgrains and water. Once the *soma* juice has been extracted and purified, it is mixed with the milk of cows and with a lot of water. Green is the *soma* juice; may it be praised. It glistens like the sun as it flows into pots. O Soma! Listen to the hymns that are being chanted for your sake. Bring us welfare and happiness and destroy our enemies. You are the soul of the sacrifice. Grant us cows, horses, foodgrains and sons. O Soma! Shower down on us like monsoon showers.

Soma is worthy of worship. May *soma* juice bring us fame. May it bring us happiness and good fortune. May it enable us to triumph over our enemies. May it enable us to perform many sacrifices. The priests who perform the sacrifice extract *soma* juice so that it may be offered to Indra. *Soma* juice is used by us to worship Surya. Many are the weapons that adorn Soma. Soma will grant us happiness and wealth. The purified *soma* juice will increase our welfare and destroy our enemies.

O Soma! Many are the fruits we desire through this sacrifice; we chant hymns in your praise so that you may grace the sacrifice. Grant us riches and horses.

Soma juice is like food. The sage Jamadagni has praised the *soma* juice, may it grant him cows and foodgrains.

O Agni! We crave your friendship so that we may not be unhappy or oppressed. We have collected sticks so that your flames may be lit. We stoke your fires on the occasion of every sacrifice. We offer oblations to you. Please grant us long lives and make our sacrifice a success. Your friendship will protect us from all harm. O Agni! We have lit you according to the prescribed rites. We have offered oblations to you so that you may take them to the gods. We wish the gods to be here for the sacrifice. Summon Aditi's sons here.

O Mitra and Varuna! After the day has dawned, we pray to you. We also pray to Varuna, Aryama and the other gods. The learned chant hymns to Mitra and Varuna so that they may obtain strength. Mitra and Varuna will make the sacrifice a success. O Varuna! Since we are praying to you, will you not bring us riches? Will you not bring us foodgrains and divine bliss?

O Indra! Destroy all our enemies and bring us riches. O Indra and Agni! The two of you are the true priests for this sacrifice. You are the ones who deserve praise as you are always pure and untainted. You ride on chariots, you destroy all enemies, and you can never be vanquished. Acknowledge our praise. O Indra and Agni! The priests have crushed *soma* herbs for you and extracted the *soma* juice.

O Soma! Your sweet juice has been extracted so that it may be offered to Indra and the Maruts. The learned chant your praise. The priests purify you. Let Mitra, Varuna, Aryama and the Maruts drink the pure *soma* juice. Golden is the colour of the juice; may it bring us riches. Listen to the sound that *soma* juice makes when it is strained through strainers made of sheep-hair. The pure juice is mixed with the milk of cows so that it may be offered to the gods. The sons of Aditi will drink the *soma* juice. Indra, Vayu and Surya will drink the juice; it will mingle into their beings. May *soma* juice be purified so that it can be offered to Bhaga, Vayu, Pusha, Mitra and Varuna.

By Indra's grace, our cows will give us milk and clarified butter. O Indra! After we have prayed to you, grant us all that we desire. The two wheels are the driving force behind a chariot. May our hymns be the driving force that will motivate you to grant us wealth. Wonderful are the deeds that Indra performs. He will grant riches to all his devotees.

We call upon Indra to grant us protection. We call upon him every day, the way we call upon our cows at the time of milking. Indra is the drinker of the *soma* juice. He will come to our sacrifice and drink the *soma* juice we have offered. He will grant us cows and prosperity. He will grant us wisdom, but he will not grant the wisdom to others. O Indra! Flood heaven and earth with your benevolence like the rays that the first flush of dawn brings. Aditi, the mother of the gods, gave you birth. You are the emperor of all men, you are the one who is truly learned. You are the

receptacle of all power. You are the one who vanquishes all enemies. O Indra! There are enemies who would like to subjugate us as slaves. Rob them of all their power.

Soma is supreme among all objects, *soma* herbs can be found in the mountains. Look at the *soma* juice flow through the strainers. Soma is omniscient. The sweet *soma* juice is the fount of all happiness. All the gods desire to drink *soma* juice. We have extracted the *soma* juice so that we may obtain riches, cows, foodgrains, good sons and servants. The sacred *soma* juice is drunk by Indra, the Maruts, Aryama, Bhaga, Mitra and Varuna. May the gods protect us.

The priests have extracted *soma* juice so that the gods may be pleased. The *soma* juice has been strained and hymns have been chanted in praise of Soma. The hymns and oblations have made *soma* juice even more tasty. *Soma* juice will inspire the officiating priests. It will please the gods. *Soma* juice has been mixed with water; it will bring us strength. Glistening *soma* juice has been strained into pots. *Soma* juice has been mixed with water and with curds.

Soma herbs have been placed on leather obtained from bulls. They have been crushed with stones. *Soma* juice will bring me riches from the four directions. Indra will drink the *soma* juice and be pleased. He will grant me a son who will become a leader. Surya will drink the *soma* juice and become as powerful as Vayu. The flows of the sacred *soma* juice will make our sacrifice a success. *Soma* juice will grant us seven thousand forms of riches, so that we can fight with our

enemies. *Soma* juice will be as fruitful as a tree laden with ripe fruit. *Soma* shoots arrows and kills enemies. He will be with us when we kill enemies astride our horses. He will be with us when we kill enemies with weapons or with our bare hands. *Soma* juice will be by our side when we kill enemies who are sleeping or fleeing.

O Agni! You are deserving of worship. Reside with us and be our protector. Ensure our welfare and grant us riches. Great is your radiance. We pray to you so that we may obtain happiness, friends and sons. May Indra and the other gods look upon us kindly.

May Indra and the other sons of Aditi make our sacrifice a success. May our bodies prosper and may we obtain sons and grandsons. May the sons of Aditi and the Maruts banish all manner of illness from our proximity. May they guide us in the preparation of medicines.

O learned men! Pray to Indra, the destroyer of Vritra. He will listen to your hymns. Even the Maruts worship Indra. Who is Indra? He is the one who is learned and always youthful. O Indra! May we prosper in the shade of your benevolence.

The sage Ushana was a great poet. He recited the stories of the lives of the gods through his hymns. *Soma* juice was praised in Ushana's hymns.

There was a learned sage named Vrishagana. His enemies brought him grief. Vrishagana went to the place where *soma* herbs were being crushed. He chanted hymns in praise of *Soma* and started to play on a musical instrument known as *vana*.

Many are those who have praised the *soma* juice. Many are those who have extracted the juice. *Soma* juice is full of energy; it is green during the day and shines during the night. The sound of *soma* juice being strained is like the sound of horses and chariots. When *soma* juice is being strained into pots, its speed is like that of chariots. *Soma* rules over all hymns. The seven priests who perform the sacrifice adorn *soma* juice with oblations.

Soma juice is extracted and purified for the sake of Indra. It increases Usha's energy. *Soma* juice is like a herald who opens the door of the sacrifice, it is the fulcrum of the sacrifice. *Soma* juice is the most precious object in the universe.

On the occasion of the sacrifice, *soma* juice is extracted in accordance with the prescribed rites. It is mixed with water and strained into pots. *Soma* juice is like truth itself. When *soma* juice purifies men, Indra decides to grace the sacrifice by his presence. *Soma* juice is prepared for Indra, Vayu and the Ashvinis. The sweet juice will be offered to Mitra, Varuna and Bhaga. Heaven and earth will obtain for us riches and foodgrains through the agency of *soma* juice. Many are those who crave *soma* juice. For, it brings happiness. It is *soma* juice which makes a sacrifice a success. O *Soma*! We pray that you may grant us wisdom. We pray for sons and grandsons.

For the sacrifice, the priests create Agni by rubbing two sticks together. Agni is the mouth of the gods, he is like the crest of heaven. Agni brings welfare to all of mankind and Agni's flames are lit on the occasion of

the sacrifice. The fire-god is deserving of worship; he is like an emperor to us all. The learned one will be our protector.

O immortal Agni! All the gods and all the priests bow before you in obeisance. You are the leader of the universe. When your flames light up the region between heaven and earth, the gods descend to grace the sacrifice. The priests pray to the great god Agni who is like the axle of the sacrifice. He is like the flag of the sacrifice. It is to Agni that all the oblations are offered.

O priests! Chant sweet hymns for Mitra and Varuna. These two gods are full of valour. The hymns will bring them to the sacrifice. Mitra and Varuna are revered amongst all the gods. It is they who create water. They will also grant us riches through their energy.

O radiant Indra! Come to the sacrifice. *Soma* herbs have been crushed and pure *soma* juice extracted for you. The priests are summoning you, hymns are being chanted for your sake. You are the possessor of proud steeds. Come to the sacrifice and accept our oblations.

Agni is the lord of all riches. His radiance will make all of us deaf. Pray to Agni. The priests pour oblations into the fire, these oblations will please Indra. Indra will grant us rains. O Indra and Agni! Please grant us foodgrains and swift-footed horses.

Indra has been satiated by the *soma* juice and has become our friend. *Soma* juice has been strained into

pots and has been mixed with water. O Soma! Those who are desirous of performing a sacrifice have chanted hymns in your praise. The green *soma* juice has been mixed with the milk of cows. O pure juice! Grant us foodgrains and brave sons.

One who worships Indra on the occasion of a sacrifice never has to undergo any hardship. Cows bow in obeisance before Indra. Heaven and earth bow down before him. We also pray to the valiant Indra.

O priests! Sing of the glory of the pure *soma* juice. Soma is the protector of the gods, he is the one who increases our happiness. Mix the *soma* juice with water so that it may be offered to the gods, so that it may be offered to Mitra and Varuna. Purify and strain the *soma* juice in strainers made of hair. Mix it with the milk of cows so that it may give us energy. O Soma! The priests have extracted your juice so that Indra may be satisfied. *Soma* juice is extracted far and wide, it is extracted on the shores of the lake named Sharyanavati! *Soma* juice is extracted on the banks of rivers: The shining juice will bring us valour from heaven. It will bring us foodgrains.

O Agni! The sage Vatsa is praying to you so that you may come to his sacrifice. We call upon Agni to aid us in battle, we call upon Agni to provide us rain. Agni will protect us during our battles. He will give us brave sons who will vanquish our foes.

O Indra! You are the performer of wonderful deeds. You are our father and our mother. We ask that you may give us happiness. Famed is your valour. Make

us valiant as well as. You are the wielder of the *vajra*, you are the lord of all wealth. Pray give us wealth with both your hands.

The *soma* juice has just been extracted; it is still young. The breeze will purify it. The priests will chant hymns to *soma* juice. The juice will make a sound when it is strained. The sages praise *soma* juice through a thousand hymns. *Soma* juice will enhance Indra's glory. The milk of cows will be mixed with *soma* juice in pots. Indra will be pleased with *soma* juice and will give us rains. Vayu and the Ashvinis will be pleased with our offerings of the pure *soma* juice. They will grant us valour. May *soma* juice summon the gods to the sacrifice. The learned praise *soma* juice. It is shining and green, it is mixed with the milk of cows. *Soma* juice will satiate Indra. It will destroy our enemies and bring us prosperity. We will receive foodgrains and offsprings. O *Soma*! Bring down the rains from heaven. Make us strong in battle.

For Indra and Vayu, *soma* juice is strained through strainers made of hair. The priests chant hymns in praise of *soma* juice. *Soma* will make us strong and powerful. We will obtain foodgrains. Myriad are the riches we will get. *Soma* juice will be offered to the great Indra.

Sweet is the *soma* juice. It will please Indra. *Soma* juice will reside at the place of the sacrifice. *Soma* is learned and great. He is like the axle of the atmosphere. Let *soma* juice acknowledge our praise; let it be mixed with water. The sacred juice will give us foodgrains and dwelling-houses. The sound of *soma*

juice being strained is like the sound of the musical instrument named *vana*. *Mantras* from the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda* are being chanted in praise of Soma. Soma juice brings happiness.

Soma destroys our enemies, he destroys the cities of our enemies. King Divodasa performed a sacrifice. He wished that the demons Shambarasura, Yadu and Turvasu might be killed. Indra drank *soma* juice and did the needful. Soma juice brings us rain for the welfare of mankind. Surya has a steed named Etasha. It is *soma* juice which harnesses Etasha to Surya's chariot.

O gods! You reside among men, you ensure the success of sacrifices, and you oppress enemies. Send revered Agni to the sacrifice as your messenger. When flames burn down a forest and the blaze is fanned by the wind, Agni's black route is clear to all. O Agni! Your tongues rise high. Your smoke is our messenger to heaven. It is thus that we attain the gods. And it is your flames that bring down rain.

We know that Indra destroyed the demon Vritra. We know that Indra is truly valiant. Indra was born so that he may shower us with gifts. Indra is praised through hymns. He is pleased through offerings of *soma* juice. Indra will bless us with riches.

O Soma! You are the son of the mountains. Soma herbs have been crushed with stones and the juice has been extracted. Indra and the other gods drink the *soma* juice. So do the Maruts. The sweet *soma* juice is like heavenly nectar, may it please the wielder of the

vajra. May it increase the strength of the gods. The green *soma* juice is mixed with the milk of cows.

O Indra! The priests are summoning you from the north, from the south, from the east and from the west. King Anu chanted many hymns in your praise. Hymns were also chanted to you for the destruction of Turvasu. The sages Ruma, Rushama, Shyavaka and Kripa have prayed to you. The sage Kanva is praying to you. Come and attend the sacrifice.

O Soma! You have been purified for Indra and Vayu, for the other gods. Banish all atheists from the sacrifice.

O Agni! You are like our revered guest. We pray to you so that we may obtain riches. There are two forms in which Agni can be found in the midst of mankind. The first is known as *garhapatya* and the second is known as *ahavaniya*.

Indra is ever youthful. He listens to our prayers and offers us protection. He preserves our sons. Indra is invincible in battle. He is as strong as a mountain. May Indra reside with us and make truth flourish. Indra's fame will spread in heaven and on earth. O Indra! Demolish the cities of our enemies. O wielder of the *vajra*! The demons stole the cows and hid them in caves. You rent the caves and rescued the cattle.

O Soma! You shower down rain. The divine *soma* juice is extracted for Vayu, Mitra, Varuna and the Maruts. It increases Indra's strength. It establishes Surya's energy. From time immemorial, the green *soma* juice has been extracted for the sake of the gods.

The sage Trita wished to please Indra. He crushed *soma* herbs with his own hands. Soma is the son of heaven. *Soma* juice has been extracted for Indra and Vayu.

Blessed is he who studies the *mantras* collected by the sages. The goddess of learning blesses him with milk, clarified butter, honey and water. These *mantras* purify, they bring welfare. These hymns are like immortal nectar, preserved by *brahmanas* learned in the *Vedas*. These *mantras* are like the manifestations of the gods themselves. Let us be sanctified by them. We will be freed through the studying of these hymns. They will make us immortal.

We bow down before the great Agni, the learned one who redeems sinners. Agni is praised at every sacrifice. Agni protects us. O Agni! You are none other than Mitra and Varuna.

The sage Vatsa is praying to Indra; may Indra's fame spread. The sage Kanva is pleasing Indra through his hymns.

O Agni! May your flames light up well! May our oblations be carried to the gods. I praise Agni so that I may obtain happiness.

May Mitra, Aryama, Bhaga and Savita bless me with riches. O great gods! Come and grant us our wishes and deliver us from sin. Let Aditi, the mother of the gods, also listen to our prayers. May *soma* juice please the great Indra. May he crush under his feet those with hate in their hearts. May Indra bring us prosperity.

O friends! Pray only to Indra. No one else deserves praise. Repeatedly chant hymns to Indra. Sweet are the hymns that are chanted for Indra. The sages Kanva and Bhrigu succeeded in pleasing Indra. They saw him rise like the radiant sun and chanted his praise.

O Indra! You have no enemies from the time of your birth. You have no brothers. You do not befriend men simply because they are wealthy. You hate those who are atheists and drinkers of wine. You befriend those who are learned and guide them along superior paths. O Indra! Two horses are harnessed to your chariot. Their colour is like that of peacocks and their backs are pure white. Your chariot will bring you to the sacrifice so that you may be satiated with our offerings of *soma* juice. Indra killed the demon Vritra. Indra destroyed ninety-nine cities of his enemies.

Praised be Surya's radiance. May Surya make us healthy and grant us long lives. The great Surya grants us foodgrains and preserves righteousness. Surya was appointed to hold up heaven. It is Surya who destroyed the demon Vritra.

O Indra! Protect the righteous. Protect us today, tomorrow and the day after. Protect us during night and day. Strong are the two arms of he who wields the *vajra*.

We call upon Sarasvati. She will grant us wives, sons and riches. The river Sarasvati is fit to be prayed to. (Sarasvati was a goddess in the *Vedas*, but she was not the goddess of learning. She was also a river. It was only subsequently that Sarasvati became the

goddess of learning.) The seven rivers are like Sarasvati's sisters, mingling into her being.

Savita grants us wisdom and we meditate on Savita.

O Brahmanaspati! Make us learned, may the flow of knowledge course through our bodies.

O Agni! Grant us long lives. Grant us strength and foodgrains and banish our enemies.

O Mitra and Varuna! Bring us riches from heaven and earth. Your valour is famed among the gods. May Mitra and Varuna multiply our strength. They are the lords of foodgrains. We pray to them for rain. Let them ascend their chariots and come to our sacrifice.

Indra is the enemy of the wicked. He is the source of all strength. Enemies tremble at Indra's sight. O Indra! This sacrifice is being performed for you. Bless us with sons and grandsons. *Soma* juice has been mixed with flour in three vessels for your sake. Come with Vishnu and drink the *soma* juice. May it please you. O Indra! You manifest yourself at the time of the sacrifice. You desire to raise the burden of the universe on your shoulders. You are learned. It is your energy that fills the earth and heaven. Indra divided the *soma* juice that was offered into two parts. One part he drank himself, the other part he kept for the other gods. O Indra! Send the other gods also to drink *soma* juice.

O Indra! My hymns can rival the hymns that the sage Kanva recited for you. Listen to my hymns. They

are unsurpassed. O Indra! Listen to the hymns that the sage Ashva is chanting. There has never been anyone who can equal Indra. Nor will there ever be anyone who can rival him. O priests! For your sake I am summoning the Indra who created Usha. I am summoning the Indra who created moonbeams.

The great god Agni desires ladles full of clarified butter. Fill the vessels with oblations, fill them with *soma* juice. The gods have made Agni their aide; Agni provides riches to those who perform sacrifices. Let Agni accept our praise. Bow down before Agni if you wish to triumph over your enemies. Agni is the purifier. We light his flames on the occasion of the sacrifice. We recite hymns composed in the *gayatri* metre to increase Agni's glory. Let Agni grant us cows and horses.

O Agni! Who is like a brother unto you among men? Who is the one who is performing a sacrifice dedicated to you? Who knows what you are truly like? Where do you reside? You are like a brother and friend to men. You are the friend of the priests. O Agni! Please Mitra, Varuna and the other gods for our sake. You are the one who banishes darkness. Let us light Agni's flames. Let us pour clarified butter into them. This first hymn is so that Agni may protect us. This second hymn is so that Agni may protect us. This third hymn is so that Agni may protect us. This fourth hymn is also so that Agni may protect us.

When the dark night is gone, Agni manifests Usha and Surya. Usha is Agni's sister. We pray to the immortal Agni for our welfare. The omniscient Agni is

the son of power. O Agni! Be our messenger to the gods.

O Indra! Your devotees chant your praise. Your devotees include those who perform sacrifices. They also include Ribhu and Rudra. O Indra and Agni! Those who read the *Vedas* sing *sama* hymns for you. You demolish the cities of your enemies.

O Varuna! Listen to my prayers and make me happy. Protect me from all danger.

O Pusha! Grant me cows, horses, foodgrains, sons and servants. Offer me protection.

O valiant Maruts! I am sweating from the effort of chanting hymns dedicated to you. Grant us all our wishes.

O Dyavaprithivi! May heaven and earth listen to our prayers. May we obtain the objects that we desire. May our sacrifice be a success.

O Indra! You are great and your friendship will give us courage. May we never tire and may your devotees attain what they desire. May Turvasu and Yadu be pleased. Evil enemies cannot bring Indra any harm. Let Indra drink the *soma* juice. Indra's glory has been praised by a thousand sages. Great is Indra's expanse. He is like a gigantic ocean.

O Vishnu! I praise your sacred name. May you never be far away from us. Many are the rays that radiate from your being. I pray to you, I offer you oblations. Accept my oblations.

O Vayu! I am pure of heart. You are the first one to whom I am offering *soma* juice on the occasion of the sacrifice. O god! Your steed is named Niyuta. Ascend it and come to the sacrifice. O Vayu! You are the one to whom *soma* juice must be offered. You are the lord of all power; come to us on your chariot.

Sacrifices enhance Indra's glory. It is Indra who releases rain from the clouds in the atmosphere. Indra splits the clouds. The cows were hidden in caves by the demons. Indra released them and gave them to the sage Angira. The demons fled in dismay. Indra will grant us protection. He will rob our enemies of their riches. May Indra's *vajra* always be sharp. Vishnu, Mitra, Varuna and the Maruts worship Indra.

Vishnu displayed his valour. He kept his feet in three places. It is in those three places that the universe rests. Vishnu's three feet encompass the entire universe. Admire Vishnu's prowess; he is fit to be Indra's friend. (In the *Puranas*, this is the story of Vishnu's dwarf incarnation. Vishnu, as a dwarf which later became gigantic, traversed the universe in three of his footsteps.) The great Vishnu is in the loftiest part of heaven. From there, his radiance blazes forth.

O priests! Chant hymns for Indra. Compose hymns in the *vrihati* metre. May Indra grant us riches and land. May he grant us the light of the sun. We will offer Indra *soma* juice mixed with milk.

Agni is the leader of heaven. Pray to him so that you may obtain divine wealth. O Agni! Carry our oblations to the gods. O sage Sobhare! Agni is the bearer of many gifts, he is the one who presides over

sacrifices. Pray to him. O Indra and Agni! The race of the slaves (*dasa*) ruled in ninety cities. But you rocked them all.

Usha has made her presence felt. She is the one who inspires. She has emerged after her sister, the night (*ratnī*), has disappeared. Usha is the daughter of Surya; she is as beautiful as a mare. Look at Usha's radiance. She is the one who nurtures sacrifices. She is the friend of the Ashvins. Usha is the mother of the sun's rays. Beloved Usha brings light to heaven.

We praise the Ashvins. They are the ones who destroy our enemies, they are the ones who create rivers, they are the ones who grant riches and wisdom. O Ashvins! Your chariot is transported to heaven by the birds and we recite hymns for you.

O Usha! Your arrival signifies the beginning of the sacrifice. Grant us many riches so that we may be able to take care of our progeny. Usha will give us cows and horses, she will make our sacrifice a success. O Usha! Bring us good fortune. Harness your red steeds to your chariot. Ride your chariot to our sacrifice.

O Ashvins! Come to our houses. Come to the place where we are hosting the sacrifice. Bring us cows and gold. It is now dawn and the horses have woken up. They will be harnessed to golden chariots and will bring the Ashvins to our sacrifice. O Ashvins! You become manifest in heaven. Descend to earth for our welfare.

O Usha! Great is your radiance. Grant me knowledge and riches. You have thus borne gifts to

men from ancient times. Bring gifts to me as well. You are always full of truth. I am Satyashrava, the son of Vaya, who is speaking. O daughter of heaven! Sunitha, the son of Shuchadratha, is praying to you. Bless him and bless Satyashrava, the son of Vaya. Grant us riches and manifest yourself for our benefit. You are the one who destroys darkness.

O Ashvinis! The sages are praying to you for power and riches. They are adorning your chariots with their hymns. You are the ones who know the secret of making wine (*madhvi*). Please listen to our prayers. There is no need to listen to the others who are praying to you; come to our sacrifice instead. I wish to triumph over my enemies. Aid me in this endeavour. O Ashvinis! You are the ones who ride in golden chariots, you are the ones who are adorned with jewels. Come to us and grant us foodgrains and riches.

O Surya! You are truly great. O Aditya! (Aditya means a son of Aditi.) You are deserving of worship. Your greatness is fit to be praised. It brings you fame. You are the one who destroys demons. It is for this reason that the gods have made you their leader.

O friends who are chanting hymns! Pray to the Indra who destroys enemies and makes the strings of their bows break. It is Indra who makes the rivers flow. He splinters the clouds and showers us with rain. Indra has no enemies. We will offer oblations to Indra and please him. May our enemies be destroyed. May those who seek to attack us be smitten by Indra's weapons. O Indra! Grant us the boon that we may perform wise deeds. Grant us riches. We are singing

soma hymns to you composed in the *gayatri* metre. The sage Kanva is praying to you. Hearken to his prayers. We have offered *soma* juice to Indra. We thrive and prosper when Indra reigns in heaven.

I pray to the gods who will be like our friends on the occasion of the sacrifice. I chant many hymns to them. My *soma* hymns to them are composed in the metres *gayatri*, *trishtupa* and *jagati*.

Water brings us happiness. It provides us strength and foodgrains. Water also grants us divine wisdom. O water! We drink you for the sake of happiness. You look after us the way a mother looks after her child. O water! May we have the power to rear our sons and grandsons.

Let Vayu bring joy to our hearts. Let Vayu grant us long lives. O Vayu! You are our father, you are our brother and you are our friend. Grant us long lives. In your house can be found the heavenly nectar. May we obtain a part of that.

The enemies have the power of terrible bulls, but Indra defeats them and makes them cry. Indra destroys the evil. Unequalled is Indra's valour; he can demolish thousands of enemies single-handedly. Those who lead us into battle will seek Indra's aid. Indra holds arrows in his hand; he is the one who drinks the *soma* juice. Marvel at the way Indra wields his bow.

O Indra! You are the one who rules over countless numbers. You are the one who kills the demons. Come here on your chariot and grant us protection. May we

triumph in battle. Great is your valour. Be seated on the chariot that will be victorious. O generals! Indra is the one who will destroy the fortresses of the enemies. His arms are as strong as the *vajra*. Place Indra in the forefront of the battle. Make him kindly disposed towards you before you march into battle. May Indra grant us protection. He will be the leader of our cohorts.

May Indra, Varuna and the Maruts grant us power. May the victorious gods ride with us.

O dark gods who preside over evil! Stay away from us, but delude the minds of our enemies. Make their hearts full of sorrow and misery. Bring darkness to our enemies and make them grieve.

O warriors! Attack the enemies and be victorious. May your arms be strong. May your arrows be steeped in wisdom. They will pierce your foes and kill them all. May the enemy soldiers provide food for the vultures. Indra and Agni will aid us in battle. Brahmanaspati and Aditi will bring us joy in battle.

O Indra! Kill our enemies, destroy those who dare to invade us. Let those who design to make us slaves be immersed in darkness.

Let our arms be like the trunks of elephants, so strong that the enemies may be vanquished. O kings! We will cover you up with armour. After that, Soma will arm you with heavenly nectar. Varuna will grant you happiness. All the gods will grant you the joy of victory. Your enemies will become as blind as

beheaded snakes. Those enemies whom Agni does not kill, will be destroyed by Indra. Those who are betrayers and traitors will be destroyed by the gods. Divine knowledge will be our armour.

Indra is as fierce as a lion that inhabits the mountains. Come to us from a far and destroy our enemies with your sharp *vajra*.

O gods! We will listen to words of wisdom with our ears. O priests! We will see sacred sights with our eyes. With our strong bodies, we will pray to the gods. The gods have decided our lifespans for us. Till those lifespans are over, we will keep on performing good deeds.

May Indra the famous bring us welfare. May the learned Pusha bring us welfare. May the *suparna* bird bring us welfare. May the lord of all knowledge bring us welfare.

(This concludes the *Uttararchika* section and thus concludes the *Sama Veda Samhita*.)

I hope you have enjoyed reading the *Sama Veda Samhita*. You will have felt there is some amount of repetition. That is undoubtedly true, at least in so far as the words are concerned. But the beauty of the *Sama Veda* is not in the words, but in the lyrical quality of the metres. That, unfortunately, is impossible to convey in a translation. To get a flavour of that, you will have to read the text in the original Sanskrit.

The Atharva Veda

The Atharva Veda Samhita

It is important to understand that there were four classes of priests who were required at any sacrifice (*yajna*). The first class consisted of the officiating priests or acolytes (*hotri*). They invoked the gods by reciting the *mantras*, prepared the sacrificial ground and the altar, and poured out the libations. The hymns of the *Rig Veda* are for this class of priests. The second class of priests consisted of the choristers (*udgatri*). These were the ones who chanted the sacred hymns and the hymns of the *Sama Veda* are for this class of priests. The third class of priests consisted of the reciters (*adhvaryu*). While they carried out sacrificial rites, they chanted sacred texts and the hymns of the *Yajur Veda* are for this class of priests. The fourth class of priests consisted of *brahmana* overseers. They supervised the sacrifice and the hymns of the *Atharva Veda* are for this class of priests.

The *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sama Veda* obtain their names from the nature of their contents. The name of the *Atharva Veda* is obtained differently. In the *Rig Veda*, there are references to a person named Atharvan. He is said to have been the first person to obtain fire by rubbing two pieces of stick together. He could also vanquish evil demons through his miraculous powers. There were two other ancient families named the Angirasa and the Bhrigus. The *Atharva Veda* was first revealed to Atharvan, the Angirasa and the Bhrigus. The text obtains its name from Atharvan. The *Atharva Veda* is also known as the *Brahma Veda*. This is because the hymns of the text were meant for the *brahmana* overseers.

Unlike the other *Vedas*, in addition to prayers, the *Atharva Veda* contains charms and spells. It is almost as if the *Atharva Veda* used to be recited to counteract evil influences during the course of a sacrifice.

There are twenty books or *kandas* in the *Atharva Veda*. In the first thirteen *kandas*, the hymns are not arranged according to what they contain. There is a heterogeneous mix of prayers, charms, spells, benedictions and invocations. *Kanda* fourteen is concerned with marriages, *kanda* fifteen with wandering mendicants, *kandas* sixteen and seventeen with conjuring and *kanda* eighteen with funeral rites. *Kanda* nineteen is a mixed bag of hymns, while *kanda* twenty is primarily culled from the *Rig Veda* and consists of hymns addressed to Indra. A hymn can contain more than one verse. Although not arranged

according to contents, the first seven *kandas* do have some arrangement in terms of the number of verses the hymns contain. The hymns of *kanda* one have four verses, and those of *kanda* two have five. Those of *kanda* three have six, those of *kanda* four seven. Those of *kanda* five have eight to eighteen verses, those of *kanda* six have three, and those of *kanda* seven have one to eleven verses. In subsequent *kandas*, there are hymns extending upto eighty verses.

The distribution of hymns (*suktas*) and verses (*mantras*) according to *kandas* is as follows :

<i>Kanda</i> number	Number of <i>suktas</i>	Number of <i>mantras</i>
1	35	153
2	36	207
3	31	230
4	40	324
5	31	376
6	142	454
7	118	286
8	10	259
9	10	302
10	10	350
11	10	373
12	5	304
13	4	188
14	2	139
15	28	220

(Contd.)

<i>Kanda</i> number	Number of <i>suktas</i>	Number of <i>mantras</i>
16	8	103
17	1	30
18	4	283
19	72	453
20	143	928
	740	5962

The entire *Atharva Veda* thus consists of around 750 hymns and around 6000 verses.

The Gods of the Vedas

The *Vedas* cannot really be appreciated without some sort of an understanding of the gods mentioned in the *Vedas*. The gods of the *Vedas* were different in nature and character from the gods that one encounters in the epics or in the sacred texts known as the *Puranas*.

The three major gods of the *Vedas* were Agni, Indra or Vayu and Surya. Agni ruled over the earth (*prithivi*), Indra or Vayu ruled over the atmosphere (*antariksha*) and Surya ruled over heaven (*dyuloka*). All other gods were regarded as manifestations of these three gods. For example, all gods on earth were identified with Agni, all gods in the atmosphere with Indra or Vayu, and all gods in heaven with Surya. This at least was the version given by Yaska, a commentator on the *Vedas* who lived around 800 B.C. There were two other points of view as well. One was

that all the various gods were manifestations of the same unified supreme godhead. This monotheistic point of view can be found particularly in the *Upanishads*. An alternative point of view subscribed to polytheism. It was that the various gods could not be identified, but were distinct.

Even within the *Vedas*, the number of gods varies from place to place. In some places, there are only three gods, one ruling over the earth, the second over the atmosphere and the third over heaven. The earth, the atmosphere and heaven were known as *lokas* (regions), there being three *lokas*. In some places, the *Vedas* state that there were 11 gods for each *loka*, so that there were 33 gods in all. In some cases, there are references to 3339 gods. When it came to the age of the *Puranas*, the number of gods increased to thirty-three crores.

Many scholars have suggested that the gods of the *Vedas* are nature gods. That is, forces of nature came to be ascribed with divine qualities and transformed into divinities. To some extent, this is indeed true. But the forces of nature have been so humanised that their original elemental form is sometimes impossible to detect. This is known as anthropomorphism. Besides, there are also abstract deities with whom no forces of nature can readily be identified.

It is also important to realise that the gods of the *Vedas* cannot easily be compartmentalised into pantheons of monotheism or polytheism. What is more commonly found is kathenotheism. That is, there is more than one god. But whenever a hymn is

addressed to a particular god, that god comes to be ascribed with all the divine qualities. In the course of the hymn, the god in question is regarded as the supreme godhead and all the other gods come to be regarded as his manifestations.

The gods of the *Vedas* can now be catalogued under three different headings - gods of heaven (*dyuloka*), gods of the atmosphere (*antariksha*), and gods of the earth (*prithivi*).

The chief gods of heaven are Dyouspita, Mitra/Varuna, Surya/Savita/Pusha, Vishnu, the two Ashvinis, Usha and Chandrama. Dyouspita is regarded as the father of the universe, *prithivi* being regarded as the mother. Dyouspita and the earth are together addressed as Dyavaprithivi. Dyouspita seems to have been a personification of the sky. The gods Mitra and Varuna are almost invariably addressed in unison. Mitra seems to have been identified with the day and Varuna with the night. Mitra is also identified with Surya. In the period of the epics and the *Puranas*, Varuna came to be regarded as the lord of the oceans. But this was not the case at the time of the *Vedas*. Surya is the sun-god and Savita is a manifestation of Surya at specific points of time. Vishnu is a minor god in the *Vedas* and there are indications that Vishnu was also regarded as a manifestation of Surya. The two Ashvinis are physicians of the gods; they share a common wife named Usha (the dawn). In the *Vedas*, the Ashvinis are closely associated with Surya. They may very well have been stars (*nakshatra*) identified with the

morning and the evening. Another name for the two Ashvinis is Nasatya. Usha is the goddess of the dawn. She is also addressed as Dakshina (sacrificial fee). It was at the time of dawn that priests began sacrifices and received their fees. Chandrama is a minor god, the moon-god. He is closely identified with the god Soma.

The chief gods of the atmosphere are Indra, Aja Ekapada, Matarishvan/Vayu/Vata, Parjanya, Rudra and the Maruts. Indra is the most powerful of all the gods. He killed the demon Vritra and is accordingly addressed as Vritraha. Purandara is another of his names. Aja Ekapada is a minor god and is probably a manifestation of either Agni or Surya. Matarishvan, Vayu and Vata are all gods of the wind. Parjanya has a close relationship with them and is a personification of the clouds. Parjanya thus rules over herbs and rains. The Rudra of the *Vedas* is not the Rudra of the *Puranas*. In the *Vedas*, Rudra is a god of the wind. Alternatively, he is identified with Agni. The Maruts are also wind-gods and are regarded as the offspring of Rudra. The number of the Maruts is not unambiguously given. In some places, the number seems to be 180. In other places, there seem to be 21 Maruts. The Maruts are close companions of Indra.

The chief gods of the earth are Agni, Brihaspati/Brahmanaspati, Soma and Sarasvati. Agni is the main god of the earth, he is the fire-god. There are three different types of fire - *ahavaniya*, *dakshinagni* and *garhapatya*. *Ahavaniya agni* is used to offer oblations to the gods, *dakshinagni* is used to make

offerings to the ancestors, and *garhapatya agni* is the fire that continually burns in any household. In the age of the *Vedas*, fire was ignited by rubbing two pieces of stick (*arani*) together. These are known as *uftararani* and *adhararani*. It is not entirely clear whether Brihaspati or Brahmanaspati is indeed a god. He seems to have been more like a chief priest. He is often regarded as the lord of all hymns. It was only in a later period that Brihaspati came to be identified with a *nakshatra*. Soma is really a herb, although he is also identified with Chandrama. In the *Vedas*, Sarasvati is not the goddess of learning. She is a river, also known as Bharati.

Let us now see what the hymns of the *Atharva Veda* have to say. Since the *Atharva Veda* is fairly long, we will have to be selective. We cannot be exhaustive.

KANDA ONE

Prayer for increasing one's learning

Vachaspati, the lord of speech, adopts various forms and pervades the three-times-seven objects that can be found everywhere. Vachaspati will grant me the strength that can be found in these objects. O Vachaspati! Come before us with your divine intelligence. O lord of all objects! Please me. May the knowledge vest with me. A bow that is properly strung at the two ends attains its object (of killing the enemies). May I be as well strung as a bow. May Vachaspati be bound by these words. May the knowledge vest with me. The lord of speech has been

summoned. May he invite us to share in the knowledge. May we never be parted from the knowledge.

(What does the expression three-times-seven objects mean? Attempts have been made to interpret this in a philosophical sense. But more simply, three-times-seven only indicates an indefinite number.)

Prayer for obtaining victory

We know that Parjanya is the lord of the arrow and that he is the lord of the bow. Parjanya is the one who nourishes us. The earth (*prithivi*) is Parjanya's mother. She is well-versed in all the arts. We know that well.

O mother earth! We are your sons. May we thrive. Make our bodies as firm and strong as rocks. May we be charitable. May we be free from hatred, and may all our enemies be banished.

O Indra! A cow that is tethered to a tree strains at the rope and advances towards her calf. O Indra! May our arrows advance as forcefully. The space between heaven and earth is full of energy. May the arrow that I have shot hang between heaven and earth (in the air). May its energy preserve it from ailment and disease.

Prayer for recovery from illness

We know that an arrow has five powerful fathers. They are Parjanya, Mitra, Varuna, Chandra and Surya. May the energies of these five gods enter your body and make you well. May the earth pour long life into you. May all illness be purged from your body.

Prayer for obtaining blessings from water

The water of a river is like a sister and a mother to one who performs a sacrifice. The river winds its own path. The water is so pure that it seems to be mixed with milk and honey. The rays of the sun purify the water of the river and the sun is always present in it. It is the water that enables us to perform a sacrifice. Our cows drink water from the river. We offer oblations to the water and sing its praise. The water is like a heavenly drink (*amrita*). In it is the medicine for all illnesses. The divine qualities of pure water make our cows and steeds strong.

O water! You bring us happiness. You increase our strength and bring us health and wealth. Water is full of the juices that increase our welfare. Bring us welfare and nourish us the way a mother nourishes her children. O water! You are the one who satisfies, may you bring us completeness. Make us thrive. Grant us the happiness that we desire. You are the one who nourishes all living beings.

May divine water bring us happiness. May divine water grant our wishes and bring us peace. The god Soma has told us that in water can be found medicines and herbs. He has also told us that Agni is the one who will ensure our welfare. O water! Grant us medicines. Protect our bodies so that we may be able to see the sun for many years. May the water of deserts bring us happiness. May the water from lakes and ponds bring us happiness. May the water from wells bring us happiness. May the water from rain bring us happiness.

Prayer for spreading righteousness

O Agni! Bring the *kimidins* and *yatudhanas* here (for their destruction). You are the god who destroys all the *dasyus*. You are the one who lives in the best of places and you are the lord of all learning. You are the one who controls our senses. O Agni! Accept the clarified butter that has been offered and destroy the evil ones. May the *kimidins* and the *yatudhanas* weep in misery. O Agni! These oblations have been offered to you and Indra. May Agni accept them first and may the strong Indra accept them after that. Let the *yatudhanas* come and say that they are present (so that they may be destroyed). O Agni! You are the learned one. Let us witness your valour. You are the one who guides us along the righteous path. Let the evil *yatudhanas* become acquainted with our wishes. Let them come here and be slaughtered. O Agni! Begin your task of destruction, we have created you for that purpose. O Agni! You will be our messenger and will carry our message of destruction to the *yatudhanas*. Tie up the *yatudhanas* and bring them here. Indra will behead them then.

(The *kimidins* were evil spirits. The name is derived from the fact that they wandered around saying "*kim idanim*" meaning "what now?", or "*kim idam*" meaning "what is this?" The *yatudhanas* were evil spirits, demons or sorcerers. The word *dasyu* has now come to mean a dacoit. But in the age of the *Vedas*, it signified a class of powerful and superhuman beings or malignant spirits opposed to gods and men.)

This sacrifice will bring the *yatudhanas* here like a river brings with it foam. May the sinners, men or women, come here and confess. Let us welcome the sinners who come. O Brihaspati! Keep the sinners under restraint. O Agni and Soma! Observe them carefully. O gods who are the drinkers of the *soma* juice! Go to the children of the *yatudhanas* and show them the righteous path. May both the eyes of a sinner fall from his head. O Agni! You are the learned one. You know well the evil ones and their progeny who dwell in caves. Impart wisdom to them and relieve their misery.

Prayer for the granting of wishes

May all the gods, the Vasus, Indra, Pusha, Varuna, Mitra and Agni bring this man riches. May the Adityas and the Vishvadevas bring this man energy. O gods! May this man have power over light and fire, gold and the sun. May his enemies be vanquished and may he be blessed with happiness. O learned ones! Offerings of milk and other object are made to Indra for the sake of learning. O Agni! May this man be blessed with that learning. May he be the best of his race. O Agni! Make his sacrifices successful and grant him energy and riches. Purify his mind and shower down happiness on him.

Prayer for the pardoning of sins

Varuna is the supreme godhead. He is the one who created the gods. Varuna's wishes are like truth itself. I use the power of my learning to free this sinner from

the supreme godhead's wrath. O Varuna! I bow down before your anger. O god! I know well the various sins that mankind falls prey to. This man has sought refuge with you and will live for a hundred years. This is the message that I will announce in a thousand assemblies. O man! Many are the lies you have uttered. I obtain Varuna's pardon for all these sins. I free you from the wrath of the supreme godhead who, is like an immense ocean. O brave one! You can announce this wonderful news to other members of your tribe.

Prayer for destroying enemies

May enemies who try to pierce us with their weapons not be able to reach us. May the enemies who try to attack us from the four directions not be able to reach us. O Indra! May the shower of arrows not be able to reach us. May arrows which have already been shot, not be able to reach us. May arrows which have not yet been shot (but will be), not be able to reach us. These are the divine words which will destroy our enemies. Enemies who are related to us and those who are not related will be destroyed. All enemies, be they of superior, equal or inferior races, will be destroyed. O Rudra! Vanquish with your arrows those who attack us and try to make us their slaves. Vanquish those who bear open enmity. And vanquish also those whose enmity is implicit. May those who hate us not be able to cause us harm. All the gods will help to destroy our enemies. These divine words will be our armour.

There are many more prayers in the same vein in *kanda* one. There are prayers for solving urinary problems, easing childbirth, curing breathing problems and disorders of the blood, keeping away thieves, ensuring the welfare of the subjects, increasing the prosperity of the kingdom, lengthening life expectancy and preventing leprosy and disorders of the heart. Even though we have skipped these, you will have obtained a general idea of the first *kanda*. Let us therefore move on to *kanda* two.

KANDA TWO

The supreme godhead

The entire universe is merged in the identity of the supreme godhead. But the supreme godhead can be visualised only in the innermost recesses of the heart and it is there that a true devotee sees him. It is the supreme godhead who milked the life force and gave birth to all objects. Men who observe religious rites know of this manifestation of the supreme godhead, and praise him.

He is in the innermost recesses of the heart; he is like a heavenly drink (*amrita*). It is only the truly learned who can describe the nature of the supreme godhead. The creator's three feet are in the innermost recesses of the heart and one who realises this is learned.

The supreme godhead is our father. He is the one who gave us birth. He is our brother. He is the omniscient one who knows all the worlds that

constitute the universe. It is he who gave all the gods their names. It is into the *paramatman* (the divine soul) that the entire universe merges.

I have roamed all over heaven and earth. Having become acquainted with all objects, I have realised that the *paramatman* alone is the truth. I worship him. As speech originates with the speaker, so the universe originates with the *paramatman*. He is the preserver and the nourisher. He is Agni.

The gods are the drinkers of *amrita*. Yet, they too seek refuge with the supreme godhead. The *paramatman* alone is truth. This knowledge is as sacred as the sacred thread. I have roamed around the world and realised this.

(The creator's three feet refer to his three acts of creation, preservation and destruction.)

The *paramatman* alone is the lord of the universe. He is the one who nurtures the world. He is the only one in the universe who deserves to be worshipped. O divine god! I merge into you through my prayers. I bow down in obeisance before you. You are the one who resides in heaven.

He alone is the lord of the universe. He alone is the nurturer. He is the source of all happiness. He alone is the one who must be served. The *paramatman* is in heaven, but he is worshipped on earth. The sun is like his skin and it is he who permeates the sun's body. The *paramatman* is the one who removes all impediments. He is the one to be worshipped.

The presence of the *paramatman* can be detected in the pure life force. It is in this life force that the nurturer of all objects can be found. He is also in the atmosphere and, from there, he descends into our midst. This is the sacred wisdom that has been imparted to me.

You will see the *paramatman* in the radiance of the stars (*nakshatra*) and in the strokes of lightning during a monsoon. He is the creator. I worship him. O goddesses who rule over the life force! I worship you because you are the supreme godhead's manifestations.

O *apsaras*! You inspire us, remove our woes, satisfy our desires and rule over our minds. I worship you as manifestations of the *paramatman*.

(The word *apsara* signifies a dancer of heaven. But in this context, *apsaras* connote the goddesses who preside over the life force.)

Prayer for healing

The herbs grew on the mountain. I brought them down from there and prepared medicines for the one who is ill. O you who are ill! This medicine is for you.

O beloved herb! I can prepare countless medicines from you. Some of them will stem the flow of blood. Others will perform the act of healing.

The physician digs up the herbs. From those he makes medicines that cure wounds and make patients well.

The physician also collects herbs from the depths of the ocean. From those also he makes medicines that cure patients.

I have dug out the herb from the ground. I have extracted the medicine that will heal the wound. I will bring an end to this disease.

May the water and the herbs ensure our welfare. May Indra's weapons destroy the demons. May the arrows that are shot by the demons be unable to reach us.

Jangida mani

For the sake of a long life and for the sake of happiness, I wear an amulet (*mani*) made of *jangida*. It will increase my strength and will dry up all manner of ill health.

(The *jangida* was a plant that was cultivated so that charms and amulets could be made out of it.)

The *jangida mani* is blessed with a thousand powers. It protects the wearer from infantile disorders and the wasting away of the body. It protects the wearer from dehydration and from the watering of the eyes.

The *jangida mani* protects the body from dehydration. It prevents digestive disorders. In it is the essence of all medicines. May it protect us from all evil.

The learned have told us of the virtues of the *jangida mani*. This amulet will protect us from disease.

May *shana* and *jangida* preserve us from disease. One of these is found in the forest and the other is grown in the fields.

(The *jangida* was cultivated and therefore grew in the fields. It is used as a general expression from all herbs and plants that were cultivated. The *shana* is cannabis or hemp. It was not cultivated. It grew on its own, in the forest. The *shana* is thus used as a general expression for all herbs and plants that did not have to be cultivated.)

This amulet will protect us from violence. It will protect us from enemies, demons and disease. May the powerful *jangida mani* grant us long lives.

Indra

O brave Indra! Be pleased and advance forth. Come here on your steeds. The intelligent ones have extracted the sweet juice for you. Drink it and be pleased.

(The juice refers to the juice of the *soma* herb.)

O Indra! Sate yourself with the juice that deserves to be praised. This is the juice that grants divine bliss. It has been extracted for the sake of your pleasure. It has been offered to you with sweet words.

Indra is the one who swiftly descended on his enemies. Indra is the one who destroyed the enemies who encircled him from all directions. Indra is the one who churned the power of his foes. Fortified by *soma* juice, Indra vanquished his enemies.

O powerful Indra! May the juice which has been extracted merge into your being. May it fulfil you. You are the ruler. Come to us in your wisdom and listen to our prayers. Accept our obeisance. We have summoned you for the sake of a big battle. Be pleased and reveal your plans to us.

I have described well the valour of the great Indra. The wielder of the *vajra* performed the brave deeds that I have described. He destroyed the enemies who arose. He split asunder the mountains and released floods of water.

Indra killed the enemies who hid in the mountains. The *vajra* is Indra's weapon. It was made for him by a skilled artisan. When Indra released the waters, they flowed into the ocean.

The brave one has drunk the *soma* juice. He has drunk the juice offered to him in three containers. Indra grasped the *vajra* in his hand and slew the enemies.

Agni

O Agni! The sages are the ones who follow the righteous path. May they light your flames every month, every season and every year. May your flames rise in their divine radiance. Bring radiance to the four directions.

O Agni! You have been lit according to the prescribed rites. Blaze forth. May you bring us riches and may your devotees be 'preserved. May the

brahmanas (priests) who worship you attain fame. But may those who do not, be infamous.

O Agni! These *brahmanas* acknowledge your superiority. Bring us your blessings. You are the one who conquers all enemies. You are the one who enables us to rise above our vanities. This is your household. Come and reside here.

O Agni! Blaze forth in all your energy. Be like a friend unto us. We are like your relations, be seated in our midst. Be supreme, like a king among *kshatriyas* (the warrior class).

O Agni! Enable us to triumph over hatred and enmity. May we not be violent and may we not fall prey to temptation. The fact of your presence here is like wealth to us.

Kanda two has many more *suktas*. For example, you may have cursed someone. And you need a prayer to withdraw that curse. Apart from general prayers for removing impediments, there are specific prayers for curing diseases like gout and tuberculosis.

There are prayers for enhancing one's mental and spiritual strength, *suktas* to be chanted when new clothes are donned, prayers for banishing robbers and ensuring victory and prosperity. There are other prayers that are to be chanted on the occasion of weddings. But we will now move on to *kanda* three.

KANDA THREE

Prayer for defeating enemies

Our brave warriors will be as powerful as Agni. They will attack our enemies and burn them to ashes. Our skilled soldiers will delude our foes and slice off their arms.

O warriors who are not afraid of dying! You are indeed brave. Advance, thrust with your weapons and be victorious. Our strong and brave warriors are slicing up our enemies. Our leaders are as powerful as Agni, and they are invading our foes.

O Indra! O Agni! The two of you will aid us in the onslaught against our enemies. Burn the evil ones into ashes.

O Indra! Be swift. Use your *vajra* to slice up the enemies. Advance. Kill the enemies who are in the front, kill those who are in the middle, and kill those who are at the back. Delude the enemies in all the directions.

O Indra! Bring fear into the hearts of our enemies. Unite with Agni and Vayu to delude them from the four directions.

Let Indra delude the enemies and let our brave warriors kill them. Let Agni burn up the eyes of the foes. This is how we will defeat our enemies so that our army returns victorious.

Our soldiers are like our messengers. They will invade our enemies and demolish them. Our soldiers

are skilled. They will delude the minds of the enemies and chop up their arms.

Our army will make the hearts of the enemies tremble in fear. The enemies will be driven out of their homes; they will be repulsed in every land.

O Indra! Delude the minds of our enemies and come to us with your well wishes. Unite with Agni and Vayu to destroy our foes.

O those who are our enemies! May you start to fight amongst yourselves. May you be forced to retreat. May your minds be deluded. May all your wishes come to nought.

O disease! May you plague the bodies of our enemies. May you get under their skins. Advance and invade the enemies. Bring misery to their hearts and make them unconscious.

O warriors who are not afraid of dying! The cohorts of our enemies have invaded us. Attack them and bring darkness to their hearts.

Prayer for a coronation

O king! You have been crowned the lord of this kingdom. May your ascent be blessed with energy. May you be the emperor over all your subjects. All the directions are summoning you here. You deserve to be a king. Come here and be revered.

The subjects have acknowledged you as the king for the sake of kingdom. The four directions have acknowledged you as the king, for the sake of the

kingdom. Ascend the throne. Be a brave warrior and distribute the riches that you will acquire for us.

Your relations are summoning you with due honour. May Agni be your messenger. May your wives and sons prosper. Be energetic and accept these offerings.

The Ashvini, Mitra, Varuna, the Maruts and the other gods are summoning you here. Be of a generous mind so that you give alms. Be brave so that you may acquire riches for us.

Come to us from places that are far away. May heaven and earth ensure your welfare. It is Varuna himself who summons you here so that you may be king of this kingdom.

O king of kings! Roam throughout your kingdom as an ordinary man. Mix with the elders so that you may become learned. If you perform these good deeds, people will welcome you into their houses. Observe sacrifices in honour of the gods. May you make your subjects strong.

Your righteous and prosperous subjects have come together to prepare this throne for you. They have summoned you so that you may become their king. May you have a good heart and body and may you rule for a hundred years.

Parna mani

This powerful *parna mani* (amulet) has come so that it may destroy enemies through its power. This amulet

is like the strength of the gods and the juice of all herbs. May it energise me.

(The word *parna* now means leaf. But originally, it meant a feather or feather—like leaf. Etymologically, *parna* is related to the word fern. This *sukta* is about an amulet made out of the leaves of the *palasha* tree.)

O *parna mani*! Bring me martial prowess and bring me riches. May I regard this kingdom as my own and work towards its prosperity.

It is the gods themselves who left this amulet in the trees. They left it there so that I might wear it and live for a long time.

This *parna mani* is on my body so that it may ensure my welfare. May it give me the best of minds and may it make me the most learned of all.

O *parna mani*! Bring to me all those who are intelligent. Bring to me the makers of chariots. Bring to me workers in iron. Let such people gather around me.

O *parna mani*! Bring to me the kings. And bring to me those who are the makers of kings. Bring to me the ones who preside over villages. Let them all surround me.

O *parna mani*! You are a leaf, but you are the protector of my body. May you increase my valour. I will wear your energy on my person for an entire year.

Prayer for the unity of the kingdom

Mitra is the one who spreads his rays throughout the world. Mitra is the one who is the originator of the seasons. May Mitra come here. May Varuna, Vayu and Agni come here. May they bless us with a great kingdom that is fit to be lived in.

Let Dhata and Savita listen to my words. Let Indra and the architect Tvashta listen to my words. I call upon Aditi, the mother of the gods, to listen to my words. May I be a leader of my race.

I call upon Soma, Savita and all the Adityas with my offerings. May I attain superiority. Those in my race who are not opposed to me have lit the flames of this fire. May the flames of Agni blaze for many years.

O gods! Stay here. Do not go far away. Nourish us and bless us with foodgrains and cows. May all the gods grant us our wish that the subjects of the kingdom always stay united.

May the minds of the subjects function as one mind. May all their acts be driven by the same desires. May their motives be identical. May those amongst them who act against one another be united.

O you who are opposed to me! May your mind be like mine. Come to me. May your heart be like mine. May your acts be like mine and may you become like one who belongs to my own family.

Others *suktas* in *kanda* three are prayers against calamity and disease, and for a long life. There are prayers that have to be recited when a new

house is built. There are *suktas* addressed to water and cows. Others ensure prosperity in trade and agriculture. Still others increase one's energy and intelligence and control the senses. Let us now move on to *kanda* four.

KANDA FOUR

The knowledge of the *brahman*

The *brahman* (the divine essence) first manifested itself in the east. Learned is the one who knows this. Learned is the one who sees the sun, the moon and the stars in the sky and realises the difference between that which is true and that which is untrue.

Man has obtained this divine wisdom from his fathers. May this wisdom and knowledge enable man to lead a superior life. May this wisdom be dedicated to the *brahman*. May it be used to increase one's energy, to banish sinners, and to perform the purest of sacrifices.

One who thus befriends the *brahman* learns the true nature of the gods. It is from the *brahman* that all forms of knowledge became manifest. It is from the *brahman* that all forms of energy have emanated.

The *brahman* determined the true rules according to which heaven and earth were established. Heaven and earth were made fit for habitation. It was the *brahman* who made heaven, the atmosphere and the earth vast and firm.

Brihaspati is the lord of the universe. From time immemorial he has enveloped the universe in the four directions. It is his energy that gives rise to the pure radiance of day. It is from this radiance that the learned glean the wisdom needed to lead a righteous life.

(Brihaspati is being used as a synonym for the *brahman*.)

The learned know for sure the place where the *brahman* resides. The learned one is born at the same time as other men. But the door to true wisdom is opened a little bit for the learned one. It is through this opening that the one who is learned enters the world of learning. Other men remain outside the portals in a state of stupor.

Men are like the brothers of the gods. Brihaspati is the common father. Through devotion to Brihaspati, men obtain the knowledge that the *brahman* is the creator. The *brahman* is learned and powerful. It can never be overcome.

Who should be worshipped?

Who is the god we should worship? The one who is the source of spiritual and other forms of strength. The one whom all the gods obey. The one who is the lord of all bipeds and quadrupeds. He is the one who alone is worthy of worship.

Who is the god we should worship? The one who is the lord of all beings who breathe and blink. The one in whose greatness can be found immortality. To

shun him is to fall into the clutches of death. He is the one who alone is worthy of worship.

Who is the god we should worship? The one to whom two armies pray at the time of battle. The one to whom heaven and earth call in times of danger. The one to whom the best of paths lead. The one who alone is worthy of worship.

Who is the god we should worship? The one whose energy makes heaven, the atmosphere and the earth vast. The one whose power makes the sun shine. The one who alone is worthy of worship.

Who is the god we should worship? The one whose greatness makes the snow-clad mountains rise. The one whose greatness creates land in the midst of oceans. The one whose arms are like the four directions. The one who alone is worthy of worship.

Who is the god we should worship? Prior to creation, the water bore the universe in its womb. It is the supreme one who instilled the life force in the universe through his divine powers. He is the one who alone is worthy of worship.

Who is the god we should worship? The one who bore gold and other shining objects in his being. The one who was the lord of all the elements before creation. The one who bore heaven and the earth. The one who alone is worthy of worship.

Who is the god whom we should worship? The creator who instilled the life force in the water at the time of creation. The one who alone is worthy of worship.

Prayer for purging poison

(This is specifically for poison that has entered the body from a poison-tipped arrow.)

At first, the *brahmanas* were born with ten hands and ten mouths. The *brahmanas* drank the *soma* juice and counteracted the effects of the poison.

(*Brahmanas* were often imputed with superhuman powers right from birth. The ten heads and ten arms is simply a reference to the extraordinary powers of *brahmanas*.)

I utter these words so that the poison may be banished from everywhere in this vast expanse of heaven and earth. I utter these words so that the poison may be banished from the region where the seven rivers flow.

(The seven rivers are often identified as Indus, Sarasvati, Vipasha, Shatadru, Vitasta, Asikli and Parushni.)

O poison! The celestial bird Garuda drank you up and you could do him no harm. You could not make him mad or unconscious; you were like food for him.

A brave warrior discharged the arrow with his hand. It is the shaft of the arrow that discharged poison into your body. But I have removed the poison with my words.

I have removed the poison from the barb, the shaft, and the tail of the arrow. I have removed the poison from the head, the horn, and the other parts.

(Before arrows came to be tipped with iron or bronze, they were tipped with the horn of deer.)

O arrow! Your shaft has now become useless. Your poison has become useless. Like a dried up tree, the bow which discharged this arrow has also become useless.

The efforts of the one who crushed the poisonous plants to extract the poison have come to nought. The efforts of the one who smeared the poison on the arrow have come to nought. The efforts of the one who shot the arrow have come to nought. The mountain on which the poisonous plant grew has also been rendered useless.

O poisonous plant! What has the one who dug you up out of the ground achieved? What has the mountain on which you grew achieved? Their efforts have all come to nought.

(The subsequent prayer is for neutralising the poison from poisonous plants.)

The juice of the herb named *varana* nullifies all poison. This juice is like *amrita* itself and with its help, I purge you of all poison.

May the poison that is in the east be nullified. May the poison that is in the north be nullified. May the poison that is in the south also be nullified, when I mix the sacred juice with curds and apply it.

O you who have poison in your body! I have made a paste with sesamum seeds, curds and clarified

butter. I will apply the paste on your stomach and feed it to you so that you may regain consciousness.

O poisonous plant that has led to the unconsciousness! I will fling you aside like an arrow. The juice of my herb will banish you the way an useless utensil is discarded.

I repulse the poison with this herb.

Such is the value of this herb that it is bought in exchange for valuable objects like clothing and deerskin. O poisonous plant which has been dug up! You will not be able to cause unconsciousness.

Physicians who are learned know the use of herbs. Retain that learning and purge the poison from your warriors and children. These are the words that I have to say.

Amongst other prayers in *kanda* four are those that banish enemies, increase one's strength, and cure insomnia. There is a *sukta* devoted to making amulets out of conch-shells. Prayers are addressed to trees and to rain. There are prayers to herbs and cows. Other *suktas* increase energy, purge sins and cure worms. Let us however move on to *kanda* five.

KANDA FIVE

Prayer for victory

O Agni! May my energy manifest itself in every battle. I light your flames so that my body may become strong. May all the four directions bow down

before me. May you be my leader when I strive for victory in battle.

O Agni! Repulse the anger of my enemies and be my protector in every direction. May the lowly ones who cause me anguish keep their distance. Even if my enemies are intelligent, let their evil designs be destroyed.

All the gods, including Indra, the Maruts, Vishnu and Agni, will be on my side during battle. May my heart be strong in battle. May Vayu be on my side during battle.

May I be able to satisfy my desires. May my resolutions be true and firm. May I not fall prey to sin. May all the gods offer me protection.

May the gods grant me riches. May I be blessed by them and may I have the strength to summon them. The divine priests will grant me these boons. May I be protected from disease and may I be a brave warrior.

The divine directions will grant me vast expanses for my benefit. O gods! Bring me happiness. May I never suffer from a lack of energy. May I be able to perform famous deeds and may I be protected from sin.

O goddesses who are three in number! Please grant me a lot of happiness. May the objects which provide physical nutrition be available to me and my subjects. May I have many children and may my body not waste away. O Soma! Preserve me from the depredations of my enemies.

(The three goddesses in question are Ila, Sarasvati and Bharati. The reference to the subjects also makes it clear that the prayer is being recited by the king.)

May the supreme godhead who is omnipotent grant me the best of happiness. O lord! Grant happiness to my subjects. Preserve me from destruction and do not forsake me.

O god who is the creator and preserver! O god who is the lord of this universe! O Rudra and O Aditya! O two Ashvinis! O other gods! Preserve your devotee from destruction.

May my enemies maintain their distance. Indra and Agni will help me when I repel these foes. Aditya, Rudra and the other gods who dwell above will be like kings to me. They will inspire me and infuse me with energy.

I pray to the Indra who is the protector of my cows, horses and other riches. O Indra! Listen to my prayers. Aid me in every endeavour and shower me with your favours.

The herb kushtha

O herb who are named *kushtha*! You grow on the mountains. Descend here from the mountains so that you may cure disease.

(The *kushtha* was a medicinal plant.)

The Himalayas are the region where herbs are to be found. It is there that the bird Garuda makes his home. People know that the home of the herbs is

there. It is for this reason that they spend such a lot of money in going there.

They go to collect medicinal herbs from the Himalayas.

Heaven is thrice removed from earth. (This is in the sense of it being the third of the regions, the first being the earth.) The divine *ashvattha* tree grows in heaven. It is there that the gods first received the immortal *kushtha* plant. (The *ashvattha* tree is the fig tree. It is regarded as sacred.)

In heaven travel golden boats with ropes made of gold. It was there that the gods obtained the *kushtha* plant, like the blossom of *amrita* itself.

The roads there are made of gold and the oars on the boats are also of gold. It was on these golden boats that the *kushtha* plant was brought.

O *kushtha* plant! Make this patient sit up. Make him healthy and remove his ailment.

You were born from the gods. The *soma* herb is your friend. You are like the breath of life; you cure diseases of the eye. Grant this patient happiness.

You were born in the Himalayas. You bring welfare to mankind. Justly is your praise chanted.

O *kushtha*! Great is your name. He who possesses you is also great. You cure tuberculosis and other forms of illness.

You cure diseases of the head and the eyes. You purge the body of bad blood and increase one's strength. You have the power of healing.

Shilachi or laksha

The night is your mother. The sky is your father and your grandfather is the sun himself. You are known as *shilachi*. You are the sister of the gods.

(The *shilachi* was a medicinal plant, chiefly used to repair fractures. It is subsequently also referred to as *arundhati*. The plant was ascribed with such magical powers that it was believed to have had a celestial origin, like the *kushtha*. Hence the use of the expression sister of the gods.)

He who drinks your juice lives. You are the one who protects men. You are the one who nourishes and cures.

Like a man embracing a woman, you climb round every tree. You are the one who grants victory and a long life. You are also known as *sparani*.

(The plant was a creeper.)

Wounds are caused by rods and by arrows. They are caused by crushing. Whatever be the nature of the wound, you are the one who heals. Make this patient healthy.

You are to be found in the trees *bhadra*, *plaksha* (a fig tree), *ashvattha*, *khadira* (the acacia) and *dhava* (a shrub). You are to be found in the *parma* (the *palasha*) and the *nyagrodha* (a fig tree). You are the plant that heals all wounds. Come to me.

(This presumably means that the *shilachi* wound itself around these trees.)

You are the bringer of good fortune and golden is your hue. Your colour is like that of the sun and you make the body healthy. O curer of disease! You heal wounds and remove ailments. It is thus that you are named *nishkriti* (relief).

Golden are you, the bringer of good fortune. You grant strength and long is your hair. (The part about the hair is not clear; perhaps it refers to the juice possessing strands.) You are known as the plant *laksha* (lac). You are the sister of the water and the wind is your soul.

The *shilachi* herb is beloved like a daughter. O *shilachi*! You are to be found on the trees on which goats feed. You are the one who is drawn by Yama's swift horses.

(The last sentence is not at all clear. Yama, in this context, probably does not mean the god of death, but the sun. That is, the sun's rays (the horses) help the plant to grow.)

You are born out of the horse's mouth and get attached to the trees. (Horses again mean the rays of the sun.) You are the healer of wounds. Descend from the trees and come to me.

Other *suktas* of *kanda* five describe the knowledge of the *brahman*, help to destroy enemies and increase spiritual strength. Prayers are addressed to the cows of *brahmanas*. There are prayers to purge snake-poison and there are *suktas* to cure fever and other illnesses such as worms. Long life is sought through other prayers. There is

even a prayer which enables one to frighten one's enemies through the playing of drums. But we skip these and move on to *kanda* six.

KANDA SIX

Savita

O descendant of the sage Atharvan! Sing the praise of Savita at night. Chant many hymns to him and bear his energy in your heart.

The world is like an ocean and in this ocean, it is Savita who inspires with light of truth. He is the youthful one who grants happiness. Chant the praise of he who is the originator of non-violent speech.

Savita is the god who inspires. May we be elevated along both the paths and attain happiness.

(Savita is a manifestation of Surya. The two paths are thus those of the rising and the setting sun.)

Indra

O priests who observe sacrifices according to the seasons! Extract the *soma* juice well. Purify it so that it may be offered to Indra. Let Indra listen to my hymns and my prayers.

Let the foodgrains which are offered reach Indra! Let them go to him the way a bird goes to a tree. O Indra! O learned and brave one! Destroy the enemies who are evil.

The *soma* juice has been extracted for the Indra who is the wielder of weapons. He is the drinker of the *soma* juice. He is the famous one who is youthful.

Prayer for protection

Let the two gods Indra and Pusha protect me. Let Aditi and the Maruts protect me. Let Parjanya, the lord of the clouds, protect me. May all the gods protect me. May the seven oceans protect me. May heaven protect me.

Heaven and earth will protect me and grant me my wishes. The stones and the *soma* herb will preserve me from sin. The prosperous goddess of learning will protect me. Agni will protect me.

The Ashvinis will protect me. Usha and Ratri (the night) will protect me. O Tvashta! Preserve my house and increase my prosperity in every way.

May Tvashta, Parjanya and Brahmanaspati listen to my prayers. May Aditi listen to my prayers with her sons and brothers. May all the gods listen to my hymns and increase my strength. May they make me victorious.

May the gods Amsha, Bhaga, Varuna, Mitra, Aryama, Aditi and the Maruts offer me protection. May the evil hatred of my enemies stay far away. May the gods be close to me and banish my enemies.

O Ashvinis! Increase my wisdom and grant me protection. You are the ones who are swift. Do not err in granting me protection. O preserver of the universe! Remove all my misery.

Prayer for a sacrifice

O Agni! I have offered clarified butter to you as an oblation. May your devotee attain great heights.

Impart your energy to him and make the subjects prosper.

O Indra! May the one who is observing the sacrifice be elevated. May this devotee be a leader of his race and may he rule over all. Grant him riches and prosperity. May he live for many years and may happiness not desert him in his old age.

O Agni! May our sacrifice be a wonderful success. May Soma and Brahmanaspati bless us.

Prayer for destroying enemies

O Brahmanaspati! My enemies are not devoted to god, but try to demean him. I am performing a sacrifice at which *soma* juice is being offered. Destroy my enemies for me.

O Soma! The evil ones try to rule over us who are righteous. Strike them in their mouths with a *vajra*. May they be crushed to pieces.

O Soma! The worst among men are trying to make us their slaves, even though they may be our own kin. They are also trying to kill us. Use your power to demolish these enemies. You will be like the heaven which destroys darkness.

Prayer for peace

O Soma! The earth, the sun and other gods tread along paths that are not marked by hatred. May we also tread the path of non-violence and peace.

O victorious Soma! You are the one who destroys demons for our sake. Bless us.

O gods! You are the ones who repulse the power of the demons. Grant us happiness through your powers.

Prayer for purging snake-poison

Just as Surya knows the heaven well, I am well acquainted with the story of the birth of snakes. Just as the sun removes the darkness of the night, I remove the snake-poison from your body.

The *brahmanas*, the sages and the gods knew how to purge snake-poison. That learning has come down to us from the past and will be used in the future as well. I cleanse you of snake-poison with that learning.

I sprinkle you with the waters of rivers and mountains. I sprinkle you with the waters of the rivers Parushni and Shipala. May peace descend on your face. May peace descend on your heart.

(The Parushni is now identified as the Iravati or the Ravi. It is not possible to identify the Shipala. The Shipala probably simply meant a stream in which the aquatic plant *shaivala* grew.)

The revati herb

(This is about a herb named *revati* which can no longer be identified. The *revati* had great efficacy in making hair grow and in treating ailments of the skin.)

This is the best region of all in the three worlds. It is from here that I have collected the herbs that are used for treating ailments of the skin.

This is the best of all the herbs and the best of all the trees. It is as superior as the gods Soma, Bhaga and Varuna are superior among the gods who move.

(An alternative interpretation is also possible. It is as follows. The *revati* herb is as superior as Soma (moon) among the stars which move and Varuna among the gods.)

O *revati* herb! Great are your healing powers. Great is your strength. Make us well. Grant us an abundance of hair. Make our hair luxuriant.

Wearing bangles

O bangles! You are the ones who ensure that norms are followed. You are the controls that are exercised on the two hands. You are the removers of impediments. You ensure progeny. You ensure riches.

O bangles! please ensure that the wearer has children. O bangles! Please ensure that the wearer has sons. Inspire the children to be born properly from the womb.

Aditi, the mother of the gods, desired to have sons. She wore bangles so that her wish might be granted. The architect Tvashta prepared the bangles for her. May all women who desire children wear bangles.

The *suktas* of *kanda* six tend to be short and they are quite varied. There are the usual prayers for the defeat of the enemies and for ensuring protection. There are also prayers addressed to

specific herbs, death and water. One *sukta* speculates on the cause of rain. Yet another strives for marital harmony. Specific diseases like worms and tuberculosis are taken care of. There are prayers for spiritual upliftment and the avoidance of sin. One can be protected from curses through some *suktas*. Other *suktas* talk of curing illness through solar treatment. There are prayers addressed to cows, horses and foodgrains. But we will gloss over these and move on to *kanda* seven.

KANDA SEVEN

The *atman*

There are four ways to purify the *atman* (the human soul). The first is to concentrate one's mind through meditation so that one realises the origin of all speech. The second is to be always truthful. The third is to follow the path of learning. And the fourth is to keep chanting the name of the *paramatman*. These are the four ways to purify and elevate the *atman*.

One's birth is successful only if one does all this. One then gets to know the nature of the *paramatman*, who is like a parent to all of us. Such a person goes beyond the confines of his own *atman* and encircles himself with the power of the three worlds. He immerses himself in the *paramatman* and pervades the universe.

The *atman* is always youthful. It is always present with the physical body and protects a person like a

father. It comes into the womb of the mother. It is the *atman* which is the link between men and gods. The learned worship the *atman* through their mental powers. May those who are thus learned instruct us on the nature of the *atman*.

The *atman* is the performer of the best of deeds. The *atman* follows the best of paths so that it can merge into the *paramatman*. The *paramatman* is sweet and immortal. The *atman* elevates itself through meditation so that it can unite with the *paramatman*.

The motherland

Heaven is in the motherland. The atmosphere is in the motherland. The motherland is our mother. It is our father and our son. All the gods, all the elements, and all sorts of people can be found here. All the objects that exist are in the motherland. All the objects that will exist are also in the motherland.

This is the land that brings welfare to the performer of good deeds. This is the land that is the preserver of truth and martial prowess. The motherland is large. It never wastes away. It grants us happiness. It is the land that guides us on the righteous path and provides us with foodgrains. For our protection we sing the praise of our motherland.

This is the land that grants us protection. This is the land that gives us radiance and non-violence. It is here that we follow the righteous path and obtain happiness. Divine boats with golden oars sail in heaven. The motherland is like those boats. It is free from sin and it brings us welfare.

We sing the glory of our motherland so that we may obtain foodgrains. The vast atmosphere is in the lap of this land. May our motherland bring us a multitude of happiness.

May the demons who seek to enslave us reside in the depths of the ocean. May our motherland be populated by those excellent ones who strive for the independence of their country. I banish the demons and populate my motherland with such people.

Prayer to Sarasvati

O Sarasvati! Nourish us with your milk so that we may obtain happiness, peace and spiritual upliftment. You are the one who nurtures everything. O goddess! Nurture us so that we may thrive.

The sabha

(In the Vedic age, the king was aided in his task of government by two assemblies. These were known as the *sabha* and the *samiti*. The precise functions of these two assemblies are not known. But the *samiti* was a general assembly which everyone attended. The *sabha* was more exclusive and only select individuals attended it.)

The *samiti* of the villages and the *sabha* of the state are the two bodies that help the king to rule over his subjects. The subjects are like the king's children. May the *sabha* and the *samiti* not have a difference of opinion with the king. May the assemblies educate the king. O gods! May I be able to make good speeches at the *sabha*.

O *sabha*! I know of your existence. You are known as *narishta* among people because you do not allow the king to come to any harm. May those who are members of the *sabha* advise the king in a truly unbiased and neutral fashion.

The king acknowledges the power of learning of those who are members of the *sabha*. O Indra! May I also get to participate in a *sabha*.

O members of the *sabha*! Do not get distracted by other thoughts when you are taking part in the work of the *sabha*. If your mind wanders, bring it back to the task that is at hand. May all the members of the *sabha* concentrate on their duties and on the king.

The mother tongue

Let us not turn away from our mother tongue. May we always look upon our mother tongue with favour. Those who are desirous of pleasing the gods chant prayers to them in the mother tongue. It is the mother tongue which performs the function of purification. Each word of the mother tongue is bound to us with ties of blood. Clarified butter flows through each word of the mother tongue. All the sacred arts find expression in our mother tongue. May we use our mother tongue to describe the glory of the gods.

Prayer for a long life

O Agni! You are the beloved one. You are the one who deserves worship. You are always youthful. I increase your glory through my oblations. May we

attain you and may you grant us foodgrains. May you grant us long lives.

Prayer for marital harmony

May your eyes and mine (the husband and the wife) be as sweet as honey. May your eyes and mine be tinged with the best of ointments. Keep me in the innermost recesses of your heart. And may you and I always stay united.

A wife's prayer

I dig up this herb from the ground. This herb will attract his attention towards me. This is the herb that protects one from all misfortunes and prevents one from falling prey to temptation. It will bring him back to me and it will grant happiness.

This herb is named *asuri*. It is this herb that gave Indra the power to rule over the gods. I use it to obtain power over my husband so that I may always be loved by him.

O herb! You obtain your serenity from the moon and your energy from the sun. The other gods bestow many divine qualities on you. It is for that reason that I praise you.

O husband! Pray let me speak now. Hold your tongue. It is I who will speak at home. You will certainly get your chance to speak at the *sabha*. At the *sabha* you belong to everyone. But at home, you are mine alone. Do not even mention anyone else's name.

You may travel far away to the deserted forest. You may travel to the other bank of the river. But wherever you may be, this herb will tie you up and bring you back to me.

Prayer to Sarasvati

O goddess Sarasvati! I am offering oblations to you through the prescribed religious rites. O goddess! Grant me subjects.

O Sarasvati! I offer these oblations of clarified butter to you. These oblations are fit to be accepted, please accept them. You have the power to shower us with welfare. Please display your grace and make us sweet.

O Sarasvati! You are deserving of worship. Grant us your favour and happiness. May you never be parted from us.

Amongst the other *suktas* in *kanda* seven are prayers to various gods. There are prayers for increasing one's welfare and for obtaining protection from enemies. There are *suktas* for ensuring good rainfall and bountiful harvests. There are special charms for taking care of poison and specific illnesses. There are *suktas* dedicated to cows. However, let us move on to *kanda* eight.

KANDA EIGHT

Charm for the recovery of a man who is dying

I bow down before the *paramatman* who adopts the form of death to bring an end to all life. O man! May

your body retain your breath of life with pleasure. May this man live for a long time in the immortal rays of the sun.

The god Bhaga has established this man in the best of places. The god Soma has established him in the best of places. The Maruts have established him in the best of places. Indra and Agni have ensured his welfare and have established him in the best of places.

O man! May your life, your lifespan, your mind, and your breath of life reside in your body. May these divine words free you from the noose that is trying to drag you into the underworld. May you be elevated.

O man! Rise up. May you not fall. Free yourself from the chains of death. Look upon Agni and Surya and continue to live.

The wind that is in the atmosphere will flow freely for your sake. The water will shower down heavenly nectar on you. The sun will radiate your body with pleasant heat. Death will take pity on you. May you not die.

O man! You will rise and be elevated. You will not descend. I am making you powerful so that you may have a long life. Your physical body is like a chariot. Ascend on it for the sake of the happiness that immortality will bring. When you become old, you will be learned and will impart wisdom to others.

May your mind not tread along paths that should be shunned. Do not forget that you have a debt to

life. Do not wish to meet your ancestors yet. May all the gods protect you on earth.

Do not grieve over that which is past. That only serves to distract you from the present. Come here, away from the darkness. Come into the light. I am holding your hands.

The darkness of the night and the radiance of the day are the two rulers of time who have been appointed by the *paramatman*. They will show you the way. Come here. Do not sorrow. Do not turn away from life, towards the opposite direction.

Do not follow the path that should be shunned. That is a dangerous path and should not be followed. O man! I am telling you that such a road will lead you into darkness. Avoid that path. It will lead you to the land of fright. And if you follow the path that I have indicated, you will be free from all fear.

The fire that is in the water will preserve you. The fire that men light will preserve you. The learned fire that is in all human bodies will preserve you. The fire that is in the lightning of heaven will preserve you.

May those who eat raw flesh not kill you. Stay away from those who bring destruction. Heaven will protect you. The earth will protect you. The sun and the moon will protect you. The atmosphere will protect you from divine anger.

May all forms of learning protect you. May he who does not sleep protect you. May he who does not run away protect you. May he who is the protector himself protect you.

Let all of them protect you. Let all of them nurture you. I pray to all your protectors. I offer myself to them.

The one who is the creator, the preserver, and the protector, takes care of all living beings. He will take care of you. Your life will not desert your body. I call upon your life force to stay.

May men who are killers not be able to cause you any harm. May darkness not cast shadows on you. May evil words not grate on your ears. You will be the performer of sacrifices. How can you possibly die? Aditya, Indra, Agni and the Vasus will ensure your welfare and make you rise.

Heaven and earth will elevate you. The god who is the preserver will elevate you. All the herbs, led by their king Soma, will grant you protection. They will make you rise above death.

O gods! May this man continue to reside in this world. May he not leave this world and go into the world beyond. Applying the numerous powers that I have, I will protect this man from death.

I will make you triumph over death. The god who rules over life and foodgrains will nourish you. Let the women who have unbraided their hair and are crying, cease to weep. Let them not cry for your sake. For, it is certain that they need not weep for you.

I have revived you. I have brought you back. You have returned, as good as new. You are complete in limb and body. I have got you back your eyesight. I

have got you back your lifespan, your tenure on the earth.

The darkness has forsaken you and has gone far away. Radiance surrounds you from all the four directions. I have repulsed death and misery from your proximity. I have cured your illness.

Virat

(This hymn is about the mystical goddess known as Virat or Viraj. According to the *Vedas*, she was born from the primeval *purusha*. She is the vital spirit who is identified with the creator.)

Right at the beginning, it is certain that Virat was the universe. When she emerged, everyone was frightened and struck with terror.

She arose and was transformed into the fire that resides in households. Those who realise this, perform the duties of householders and observe sacrifices in houses.

She arose and was transformed into sacrificial fire. Those who realise this, become the beloved of the goddess. They perform sacrifices according to the prescribed rites and act as hosts for guests.

She arose and was transformed into the *sabha*. Those who realise this, deserve to be members of a *sabha*.

She arose and was transformed into the *samiti*. Those who realise this, deserve to be members of a *samiti*.

She arose and was transformed into the council of ministers. Those who realise this, deserve to be ministers and counsel the king.

She arose and divided herself into four parts in the atmosphere.

Gods and men say that Virat is the source of the learning that keeps us all alive. That is the reason for praying to her.

Gods and men call her and pray to her. They say: come strength, come force of life, come truth, come foodgrains.

Indra is like her calf and the *gayatri* metre is the noose with which she is tethered.

(There follow several verses, which unfortunately, are exceedingly obscure. In essence, Virat is compared to a cow and there is an extended analogy on the milking of this cow so as to obtain various objects.)

Amongst other *suktas* in *kanda* eight are prayers to ward off demons and counteract illness. There is also a prayer that is used in the course of exorcisms. We will skip these and move on to *kanda* nine.

KANDA NINE

The honey-lash of the Ashvinis

(This is probably the best known *sukta* of the *Atharva Veda*. The Ashvinis were the lords of light,

who appeared just before dawn. The honey-lash seems to have represented the life-giving morning breeze, with all its creative powers. The honey-lash has also been identified with a cow.)

The honey-lash was born from heaven, the atmosphere and the earth, from the waters of the ocean, from the fire and the wind. In the honey-lash is the seed of immortality. All subjects worship it from their hearts and attain happiness.

The honey-lash has been known as the seed of the ocean. In its milk is the form of the universe. The breath of life is present wherever the sound of the honey-lash is heard. In the honey-lash there is *amrita*.

In different parts of earth, different people have observed the honey-lash and tried to understand its character. The honey-lash was born from the fire and from the wind. It is the daughter of the Maruts.

The honey-lash is the mother of the gods (*adityas*). It is the daughter of the Vasus. In it is immortality. In it is the life force of all living beings. Golden is the hue of the honey-lash and it sprinkles clarified butter. It is the honey-lash which energises the earth.

The gods made the honey-lash; this is the wonderful origin that it has. It is the gods who reared the youthful honey-lash as a mother. As soon as it was born it began to observe the world.

Who can understand the honey-lash and who can comprehend its nature? Near its heart is a pot full of *soma* juice. The learned Brahma will take pleasure in this *soma* juice.

Only he who milks the honey-lash is capable of understanding it and comprehending its nature. With an unfaltering heart, such a person milks the honey-lash.

The honey-lash thunders in a loud voice. It frequents the places where sacrifices are held. It presides over sacrifices and provides milk on such occasions. The honey-lash alone is capable of measuring time.

The monsoon provides the strong and energetic water that satisfies one who is thirsty. The honey-lash is the origin of the monsoon. It is the origin of rain and of the strength that sustains the learned.

O ruler and preserver of the world! Your voice is the thunder of the clouds. You cast down your strength on the ground. Agni and Vayu gave birth to the honey-lash. It is the daughter of the Maruts.

O Ashvinis! You are fond of the *soma* juice that is offered at sacrifices. May my soul also be fond of your energy.

Indra and Agni love the *soma* juice that is offered at sacrifices. O Indra and Agni! May my soul be the beloved of your energy.

Soma is the favourite priest at sacrifices. O Soma! May my soul be favoured with your energy.

May I create the sweetness, may I obtain the sweetness. O Agni! I have come with offerings of milk for you. Impart your energy to me.

O Agni! Grant me energy, subjects and length of life. May all the gods get to know me. May all the sages and Indra get to know me.

The bees collect honey in their hives. O Ashvinis! Like that, may knowledge, energy, strength and valour be collected in my being.

The bees keep adding freshly collected honey to that which already exists. O Ashvinis! Like that, may new knowledge, new energy, new strength and new valour be added to that which is already there in my being.

The hills and the mountains, the cows and the horses, are full of the sweet juice. There is sweetness in water collected from the rain. May all this sweetness merge into my being.

O Ashvinis! You are the preservers of that which is righteous. May the honey of bees be added to my existence. May I be able to energise my speech.

O *prajapati*! O preserver of the universe! You are strong and your voice is like the thunder of clouds. You shower down strength on earth and in heaven. It is on this strength that all living beings survive. It is this strength that fulfils and sustains them with foodgrains.

If the honey-lash is like a rod, the earth is its base. The atmosphere is the stem and heaven is the tip. Lightning radiates out of the tip and, right at the top, there is a golden point.

(It is difficult to interpret this.)

The honey-lash gives rise to seven types of honey. He who understands this becomes like sweetness itself. These seven types of honey are to be found in *brahmanas*, kings, bulls, cows, rice and wheat. The seventh type of honey is honey itself.

He who knows this becomes sweetness itself. All of his possessions are blessed with sweetness. He gets to reside in the sweetest of worlds.

You may hear thunder in the sky. Realise that this is the manifestation of *Prajapati* himself. When you hear this, arise and pray to the supreme godhead. Pray that he may remember you. One who knows this is blessed with the love of all his subjects. *Prājapati* never forgets such a person.

The other *suktas* of *kanda* nine are concerned with the consecration of new houses and the glorification of cows, bulls and sacrificial goats. There are prayers to prevent diseases and a *sukta* on the proper reception of guests. But we move on the *kanda* ten.

KANDA TEN

Kena sukta

(The most famous *sukta* in *kanda* ten is known as *kena sukta*. The word *kena* means "from what". Profound metaphysical and philosophical questions are the subject of this *sukta*. Who created the universe that we see? From what was the universe made? Where did I come from? Where will I go? These are the sort of questions that are asked in this *sukta*.

Perhaps it is worth mentioning that there is also an *upanishad* known as the *kenopanishad*.)

Who created the structure of men? Who made the muscles and who made the calves? Who created the flesh and the handsome fingers? Who created the senses? And who was it that stuck two legs at the base? Who gave form to the central parts of the body?

Who fixed the calves to the base of the body? Who gave form to the upper parts of the body? Who created the two thighs that are separate and then fixed them both to the body? Who made the structure by which the legs are joined to the body?

The rotund stomach has four types of intestines inside it. Who made the stomach and stuck it on top of the legs? What about the thighs and the ankles? Who made them all?

Who was the god who brought human chests and necks together? In what direction does he reside? Who built the breasts and who built the shoulders? Who was it that strung the bones together?

Who made the arms of men strong so that they can be used to perform brave deeds? Who is the god who fixed the head on the top of the shoulders?

The two ears, the two nostrils, the two eyes and the mouth are like seven doors drilled into the head. Who is the person who made these doors? It is owing to the glory of the great creator that bipeds and quadrupeds follow the paths appointed for them.

The tongue that speaks a lot has been fixed in the centre of the mouth. Powerful speech has been placed on the tongue. The creator who did all this is the source of all action in the world. But he himself remains hidden. Who can comprehend his nature?

Man has a brain, a head, a forehead and there is a back to the head as well. Who is the supreme god who made all this and disappeared in heaven?

The world is full of sweet speech and harsh words. It has sleep, danger and impediments. But there is also happiness and bliss. Who is the great one who made all these? Why did he create the world?

There is illness and poverty. There is disease and evil. How do men fall prey to these? But there is also fullness and prosperity. There is superiority and intelligence. How do men get inspired to these?

Who made the water that courses in the human body? Who made the water that travels everywhere? Who made the water that flows in the rivers and who made the water that is red of hue? Who made the water that is the colour of iron and who made the water that is the colour of smoke? Who made the water that is above and below? Who made the water that is swift and swirling?

Who is the creator of all forms? Who is the creator of all names? Who is the creator of all fame and glory? Who has created speech and who has created learning? Who has endowed human bodies with character?

Who made life? Who made the breath of life? Who has endowed man with various traits?

Who is the god who made men so that they could perform sacrifices? Who gave men the power to follow the truth? Who gave men the power to lie? Where does death come from? And what is the origin of immortality?

Who gave men the physical bodies that are like clothing for them? Who decided on their lifespans? Who gave them strength? And who decided what human speeds should be?

Who made water? Who created the day so that it might give light? Who made the radiance of dawn? And who created the evening?

Who framed the concept of birth so that living beings may perpetuate their kind? Who gave living beings intelligence and the power to use their tongues? Who taught them how to dance?

Who covered the ground? Who circumscribed heaven? Who made the mountains great? Who inspires men to action?

Who gives us rain? Who gives us the excellent *soma* juice? From whom do we obtain faith and sacrificial power? Who has turned our mind to such deeds?

From whom do we obtain learning? From whom do we obtain the ability to attain the *paramatman*? By whose grace does man obtain fire? Who divided time into years and other units?

The learned attain learning. And it is learning that attains the *paramatman*. It is learning that enables men to obtain fire. It is learning that enables men to measure time.

How can one please the gods and attain their proximity? How can one attain divine qualities and please the subjects? Who is the one who is truly a *kshatriya*? And who is the one who can never be called a *kshatriya*?

It is through learning that one can please the gods and attain their proximity. It is learning that enables one to attain divine qualities and please the subjects. It is through learning that one truly becomes a *kshatriya*. And it is through learning that one obtains the powers that do not characterise a *kshatriya*.

Who is the one who specially preserved the earth? Who is the one who placed heaven above earth? Who placed the vast atmosphere above the earth?

The *brahman* specially preserved the earth. The *brahman* is the one who placed heaven above earth. The *brahman* is the one who placed the vast atmosphere above the earth.

The one who successfully meditates controls his head and his heart. He raises his life force to the centre of his head and even above his head.

The head of a person who meditates is a treasure that is protected by the gods. The head is preserved through food, the mind and the breath of life.

The *brahman* is spread everywhere. It is known as the *purusha*. The *purusha* is in every direction. It is to be found in the city where the *brahman* dwells. It is because of this that it is known as the *purusha*. (The word *pura* means city and the word *purusha* is derived from *pura*.)

He who is indeed immortal gets to know the city where the *brahman* dwells. The *brahman* and the other gods give such a person eyes, life and subjects.

He who knows the *purusha*, and the city where the *brahman* dwells, is blessed with eyesight till a ripe old age. He lives for many years.

The city of the gods has eight concentric circles (*chakra*) in it. It has nine doors and the city is invincible. In that city there is a treasure-house of energy. It is this that is known as heaven.

Heaven has three sides and three focal points. (What this means is not clear.) In heaven can be found a learned *yaksha*. (*Yakshas* were demi-gods.) He who knows this is blessed with the knowledge of the *brahman*.

That city is full of energy. That city removes all misery. That city is full of fame and can never be conquered. In such a radiant city, the *brahman* is always present.

Although the *kena sukta* is the most important *sukta* of *kanda ten*, there are other *suktas* in this section as well. There are prayers for fighting demons and for purging poison. There are

charms for ensuring victory and for ensuring that a woman does not have a co-wife. Prayers are addressed to cows and there is a *sukta* that describes the *brahman*. But we will skip these and move on to *kanda* eleven.

KANDA ELEVEN

Rudra

(Although this hymn is addressed to Rudra, he is sometimes referred to by other names as well.)

O Bhava! O Sharva! O creator and O destroyer! May the two of you make all of us happy. Please do not attack us. The two of you rule over demons (*bhuta*) and animals. We bow down in obeisance before you. Do not fix arrows to your bows and shoot them at us. Do not exhibit violence towards us bipeds and quadrupeds.

Do not slice up our bodies so that black and hated worms may feed on them. May dogs and vultures not feed on our dead bodies. May foxes that howl not eat our flesh. O ruler over animals! May your flies and your crows not savour our dead bodies. Preserve our bodies from all manner of destruction.

O creator of all that there is! I worship the sound of your life force. O immortal Rudra! I worship the thousand eyes that you possess. I worship the power of your energy.

I worship you from the front. I worship you from above and from below I worship you from every

direction because you are heaven and you are the atmosphere.

O Pashupati! O Bhava! I worship your mouth. I worship your eyes. I worship your skin, your eyesight and your back.

I worship your body, your stomach, your tongue and your mouth. I worship your teeth and your fragrance.

May Rudra of the thousand eyes never turn against us. May he never use his blue-flamed weapons on us.

May he who is the creator protect us from all the directions. May he surround us the way water surrounds the fire. May he not destroy us. We bow down before him.

O Pashupati! You are the creator. I bow down before you four times. I bow down before you eight times. I bow down before you ten times. I offer these five types of animals to you in sacrifice. They are cows, horses, goats, sheep and humans.

You are the lord of the four directions. You are the lord of heaven and earth. It is to you that the powerful atmosphere belongs. All the beings with senses belong to you. They are the inhabitants of the earth.

All the worlds belong to the universe. And the entire universe is the dwelling-place of the Vasus. But it is you who are the lord of the universe. O Pashupati! We worship you so that you may grant us happiness. May jackals, vultures and dogs keep their distance

from us. May women who wear their hair unbraided and weep in shrill voices also keep their distance. May those who are the bringers of sorrow thus keep their distance.

O you who wear a tonsure on your head! You are the destroyer of thousands and you are the destroyer of millions. Your metallic bow is encrusted with gold. In Rudra's arrows are to be found all the weapons of the gods. I bow down in whatever direction Rudra's arrows may be.

O Rudra! Destroy those who attack us and go into hiding. Like an assassin, destroy them when their backs are turned.

O god! You are the creator and the destroyer. You are the learned one. You are the one in whom the divine powers of creation and destruction are to be found. I bow down in whatever direction these two powers are found.

O Rudra! You are the one who comes and you are the one who goes. You are the one who stays and you are the one who sits. I bow down in obeisance before you.

I worship you in the morning and I worship you in the evening. I worship you during the day and I worship you in the night. I worship Bhava and I worship Sharva.

I see in front of me the thousand-eyed Rudra. He is the learned one who hurls a myriad of weapons. May my tongue not utter words which offend the swift-footed Rudra.

Rudra is the possessor of steeds. Rudra is the one who cannot be bound. Rudra is the one who grants happiness. Many are the rays that surround him. Rudra is the one who demolishes invincible chariots. He is the first god to be worshipped. We bow down in obeisance before him.

O Pashupati! Protect us from the weapons of the gods. We worship you so that the gods may not be enraged with us. May the weapons of the gods not come near us.

Please do not hate us, but bless us with your advice. Please do not vent your anger on us, but protect us. May we never come into conflict with you.

O brave warrior! Protect our cows, sheep and goats. Protect us humans. Remove all fear from our proximity. Destroy only men who are violent.

I worship the one whose weapons are tuberculosis, fever and coughs. I worship the one whose weapons make the sound of a powerful steed neighing. I bow down before the one whose weapons are sure and unailing.

I worship the one who is constant in the atmosphere. I worship the one who destroys people who do not perform sacrifices. I worship the one who destroys people who hate the gods. I worship his ten different forms of power.

You are the lord of deer and other animals that live in the forests. You are the lord of swans, vultures, eagles and other birds. O Pashupati! (Pashupati

literally means lord of animals.) Your revered soul is to be found in the water. It is for your sake that divine water flows down to the earth.

Your weapons will find their mark on crocodiles, pythons, tortoises and other aquatic animals. Your weapons will find their mark on fishes. None of them are your enemies, but none of them are your friends either. You look upon all of them equally. You make your presence felt from the eastern to the northern ocean.

O Rudra! May we not suffer from fever. May we not suffer from poison. May we not suffer from the divine fire. Please ensure that lightning does not strike us. May it strike some other place instead.

Bhava is the lord of the universe. Bhava is the lord of heaven, the atmosphere and the earth. Our prayers follow Bhava whatever be the direction he is in.

O creator! O king of the gods! You are the lord of all the animals. Please those who are praying to you. Shower your happiness on those who are devoted and on those who believe in the existence of the gods. Please all such bipeds and quadrupeds.

Do not be enraged with those who are our elders. Do not be enraged with those who are children. Do not be enraged with those who are our equals. Do not be enraged with those amongst us who are strong. Do not be enraged with our parents. O Rudra! May our bodies never suffer from miseries.

I worship Rudra's terrible dogs. Terrible are their mouths and some of them make a thunderous noise. Others make no sound at all.

O god! I bow down before the fearsome noise of your cohorts. I bow down before your soldiers who sport long hair. I bow down before your army which never suffers from a shortage of food. May our welfare be ensured and may we never know fear.

Other *suktas* in *kanda* eleven are on the virtues of celibacy and on life. There are prayers addressed to foodgrains. There are some hymns on the *brahman* and on warfare. We will bypass these and move on to *kanda* twelve.

KANDA TWELVE

The motherland

There are some acts which protect and nurture the motherland and the nation. These are firm truthfulness, true knowledge, martial prowess, righteousness, skill in performing deeds, performing sacrifices and giving *ḍms*. Sacred is the motherland. It not only nurtures that which is past and all the objects of the present, it bears the seed of the future as well. Such is our great motherland.

Our motherland is populated by learned men. It is populated by those who are inferior, those who are average and those who are superior. But all such people forget their differences and live together in unity and friendship. Our motherland possesses the qualities that banish disease. Our motherland is the

land where there are many great trees. This is the land where we will perform deeds and attain fame. This is the land where our intelligence will prosper.

There are many oceans in our motherland. And there are many rivers, streams, lakes, ponds and waterfalls. In our motherland are produced all sorts of grains, vegetables and fruit. In this land there are to be found many living beings. There are farmers, artisans and traders. They have come together to live in select habitations. Our motherland is the source of all material prosperity.

In our motherland can be found enterprising and hard-working farmers and artisans. In every direction that one glances, one finds fields of rice, wheat and other grains. Our motherland nourishes many different forms of life. It provides us with cows, foodgrains and other forms of sustenance.

In ancient times, the *aryas* who populated our motherland made it famous through their strength, intelligence, prowess and riches. The famous warriors of yore performed valourous deeds here. In this land the learned and brave ones conquered the violent demons. This is the land where one can find cows, horses and other animals and birds. May our motherland grant us riches, energy, valour and learning.

Our motherland is the nurturer. In it can be found gold, silver, diamonds, emeralds and other gems. Nuggets of gold, all sorts of objects, all forms of vegetation, and all forms of living beings can be

found in our motherland. It is full of all sorts of men, states and kingdoms. Our motherland is the best country of all. Its leaders are learned men and brave warriors who vanquish enemies. May our motherland nurture us with riches.

The skilled and learned ones who live here do not fritter away their time in slumber and sloth. Like a cow which is milked, our motherland gives us all the objects of our desire. Its vast expanse protects us from all manner of danger. May this land make us complete with bravery, prowess, learning and riches.

In the beginning, this land was immersed in the water of the ocean. Its immortal roots go down to the centre of the earth and are preserved through righteousness. Vast is the expanse of this land. Its heights reach up to heaven. The skilled and the learned have lived in this land for generations. May there be excellent kingdoms in our motherland. May we be blessed with energy, valour and physical strength. May we have brave soldiers.

In this land are to be found learned mendicants who roam in every direction. Just as water attains the same level everywhere, these hermits look upon all with equal favour. They travel carefully, through night and day. In our motherland can be found all that there is to eat and all that there is to drink. There is an abundance of milk and clarified butter. May our motherland increase our energy, influence, strength and prowess.

The Ashvinis look after this land of ours. Brave warriors have measured the length and breadth of our motherland. Great rulers have exhibited their valour here. Learned and powerful ones have freed this land from all enemies. This motherland is like our mother. It provides us with sustenance just as mother provides her baby with milk. May this land satisfy the hunger and thirst of our children.

O my motherland! May the mountains and the snow-clad peaks that can be found here not bring you unhappiness. May these ranges be free of enemies so that you can nurture us all. May you be fit for agriculture. May trees and plants grow on you in abundance. Great is your length and breadth, great is your expanse. Many are your different forms. You have never been conquered by enemies. Wars and battles have brought you no harm. You have never been wounded. May I prosper in such a land.

O land! In your centre can be found men who have organised themselves into various groups. You provide strength and foodgrains so that such groups can be nurtured. May I merge into this society. O land! Protect me. You are my mother. I am the son of the earth. The water which rains down and nourishes us is my father. May I be preserved.

In this land the *Vedas* are revered in every direction. In this land the best paths to meditation have been found. In this land sacrifices and other altruistic deeds are performed. The righteous ones are worshipped here and the land is uplifted through the performance of sacrifices. Wonderful are the words of wisdom that

have been uttered in this land. We have uplifted this land through our deeds. And may this land uplift us in turn.

O motherland! Destroy those who bear hatred towards us. Destroy those who bring armies to invade us. Destroy those who try to harm us and enslave us. Destroy those who seek to kill and slay us. You have destroyed such enemies earlier. Destroy them yet again.

O my motherland! Those of us who are born here and those of us who are reared here wish to serve you. The bipeds who live here, and rule over the quadrupeds, wish to serve you. Those who bask in the energy of the sunlight here, wish to serve you. Five types of men wish to serve you.

(The five types of men are priests, warriors, tradesmen, artisans and slaves.)

O my motherland! All of us are your subjects. May all of us be gifted with sweet speech. May we live together in harmony.

This land is the mother of all trees, shrubs, plants and creepers. Vast is the expanse of this land. It is here that truth, learning, bravery and righteousness flourish. This land will bring us welfare and happiness. May we always serve our motherland.

O motherland ! This is the place where we all live in harmony. May you be great and firm. May brave warriors protect you with their intelligence and valour from enemies. May we be enriched. May we prosper.

May no one bear enmity towards us. O motherland!
May you shine like gold.

In the centre of the earth, there is fire. In herbs that provide us nourishment, there is fire. In the water of the clouds, there is fire. In lightning, there is fire. In glistening stones, there is fire. In the hunger of men, there is fire. In foodgrains and in animals, there is fire.

In the sky, there is fire in the sun. This fire heats us all. The radiant fire manifests itself in the atmosphere. Many are the forms in which fire is present. Fire loves the clarified butter that is offered on the occasion of sacrifices. May the fire prevent illness in every season. May fire energise us men.

Fire is everywhere. Fire is in the earth. May fire make me radiant.

On earth, men offer oblations to the gods through sacrifices. Through this medium, mortal men make the earth yield a plentiful supply of foodgrains for nourishment. This land will grant us strength and long lives. This land will grant us intelligence and the desire to elevate ourselves.

O earth! You are the source of all fragrances. It is these fragrances that can be found in the herbs. The fragrances can be found in the water, and can be found in the rays of the sun. These fragrances will make us fragrant and will grant us happiness. May we not bear hatred towards one another. May we live together in peace and harmony.

O earth! Your fragrance has entered the lotuses. It is this fragrance that was there when Vayu and the other gods celebrated Usha's wedding. Make us fragrant through that fragrance. May no one bear hatred towards us.

O earth! Impart your energy to brave men, ordinary men, and women. Impart your energy to horses, elephants and other quadrupeds. Impart your energy to girls who are not yet married. May this divine energy energise us as well. May no one oppose us.

This land is full of mountains, ranges, stones and dust. May this land protect us through learning and valour. May we be deserving so that we can live here. We worship the golden vein that flows through the heart of this land.

Many are the trees, plants and creepers that constantly flourish here. It nurtures all objects through its divine qualities. We chant the praise of the land that protects us all.

May we not cause unhappiness to others when we are travelling on this land. May we not cause unhappiness to others when we are standing or when we are seated. May we not cause unhappiness to others either on our right or on our left.

This is the land where the search for the *paramatman* is made. This is the land that the *paramatman* has blessed through his strength and his nourishment. In this vast expanse can be found clarified butter and other objects of food. We pray to

our motherland so that we may obtain refuge here. May all living beings prosper here.

O earth! May pure water flow here so that we are sanctified. May that which we do not like and that which causes us harm not get near us. May we be purified and devote ourselves to the performance of sacred deeds.

O motherland! May you bring us happiness to the north, south, east and west. May you bring us happiness to the north-east, north-west, south-east and south-west. May you bring us happiness to the top and the bottom, the front and the back. May the land where I live never cause me to degenerate.

O motherland ! Protect me from the back, the east and the south. May my welfare be ensured. May my enemies never get near me and may I be able to vanquish them all.

O my motherland! The happy rays of the sun display for me your vast expanse. May I enjoy a long life in this great expanse. May my eyesight and other senses never dull. May I be able to perform excellent deeds throughout my allotted lifespan.

O my motherland! May you protect me when I turn in my sleep to the right or to the left. May you protect me when I sleep with my head facing the west. May my motherland preserve me from all manner of destruction.

O my motherland! I plough you and sow seeds. May these seeds soon grow into saplings. May the

most delicate parts of this land never come to any harm. My mind and heart are devoted to you. May they never suffer.

O the vast expanse that is my motherland! In you can be found the six seasons - the summer, monsoon, early autumn, late autumn, winter and spring. May these seasons bring me happiness. In you can be found night and day. May they bring me happiness.

This is the land that is graced by the sacred fire. In the clouds, the lightning and the atmosphere can be seen this sacred fire. In my motherland can be found this fire. Brave warriors have revered my motherland. They have protected it from the depredations of the evil ones. In my motherland there has been the pursuit of learning. Such is my motherland.

In my motherland can be found houses to dwell in. There are objects that can be offered at sacrifices. At the sacrifices, the officiating priests are those who are learned in the *Yajur Veda*, the *Rig Veda* and the *Sama Veda*. At these sacrifices, *soma* juice is offered to Indra.

From ancient times, in my motherland righteous deeds have been performed. Many types of sacrifices have been observed. Alms have been given. And all such righteous deeds have been praised through hymns.

May my motherland grant us the riches that we desire. May it aid the brave warriors in their endeavours. May the brave soldiers advance and invade the enemies.

The inhabitants of this land sing and dance. The brave warriors who live here fight to protect their country. In this land can be heard the sound of horses neighing and drums beating. May all enemies be banished from my motherland.

Foodgrains like rice, jowar and wheat grow in my motherland. There is no shortage of food. Five types of men live here, priests, warriors, farmers, tradesmen and slaves. Rains are plentiful here so that crops grow easily. The rains nourish this land. I bow in obeisance before my motherland.

The cities in my motherland have been built by the gods. In every part of my motherland, men perform their duties well. This is the land that produces all objects, so that the subjects may thrive. May my motherland be beautiful in every direction.

This is the land that produces gold and silver and jewels like diamonds and emeralds. May this earth grant us riches and make us like the gods.

Many are the religions that are followed here. Many are the tongues that are spoken here. Many are the houses that are there in the cities. This constant and firm land will never be destroyed. May my motherland grant us cows and riches.

There are snakes and scorpions in my motherland. There are insects whose bites are poisonous. But may they not get near us. In my motherland there can be found fever, boils and other diseases. But may these not cause us harm. May our welfare be ensured and may we be happy.

O my motherland! Here there are wide roads for people to travel on. There are routes along which chariots can be driven. Carts carry harvests and other objects. May the paths be populated by righteous people. May robbers and dacoits not frequent them. May we be victorious. May our welfare be ensured. May we be happy.

My motherland can bear heavy objects. My motherland has both good and evil. Both good and evil people eventually die here. May heavy clouds shower down rain on my motherland. May the sun spread its rays in every direction and bring purification.

O my motherland! In your forests there are carnivorous animals like lions and tigers. There are herbivorous animals like deer. There are also mad dogs and bears. But may all of these stay away from us.

May violent assassins who populate my motherland stay away from us. May those who are lazy and indolent stay away from us. May those who wish to rob our riches stay away from us. May those who are cannibals stay away from us. May demons stay away from us.

There are birds like swans and eagles in my motherland. It is here that the wind blows through the air and swirls up dust. It is here that storms uproot the trees.

In my motherland can be found the darkness of the night. But there is also the radiance of the day. May the rains shower down welfare on us.

May the sky, the atmosphere and the earth bring me wisdom. May the sun and the fire bring me wisdom. May the gods bring me wisdom and learning. May we have the power to spread in every direction.

May I be able to bear the summer and the winter. May I be able to bear the happiness and the misery. May this land make me victorious in every direction. May all my enemies be vanquished.

This is the divine land that has been made famous by the gods, the learned ones and the brave warriors. This is the land that has been made famous by those who were skilled. O my motherland! You became famous in the four directions. May you continue to be as famous as of old.

The villages and the cities that are here will make this land flourish. The forests, the courts, and the courts of law will make this land flourish. The assemblies and the battles will make this land flourish.

Battles have raised dust in this country of ours. Dust has been raised by armies and by troops of horses. But my motherland has not been harmed and trees and herbs have thrived.

May that which I say about my motherland and my country be sweet and not harsh. May all that I see bring me happiness. May I be radiant, energetic and learned. May those who wish to rob my motherland be destroyed.

May my motherland bring peace and fragrance. May the rain that showers bring happiness. May all objects of desire be obtained here.

Those who are skilled wish to serve my motherland. May they obtain foodgrains and all the other objects that they desire.

O my motherland! May you bring happiness. May you grant us the objects of our desire. May you be praised. May crops grow here in plenty. May sacrifices be observed here. May the creator bring you completeness.

O my motherland ! May those who are born here be free from all diseases. May we live for a long time. May we be learned. May we able to make you offerings.

O my motherland! Grant us wisdom so that we can ensure our welfare. May we be learned all the time. May we prosper in your midst.

Other *suktas* in *kanda* twelve are about the prevention of tuberculosis, about heaven and about cows. But we move on to *kanda* thirteen.

KANDA THIRTEEN

Funeral ceremonies

O man! This is a woman whose husband has died. According to the ancient rites, take her to be your wife. I have brought her back from the funeral. May you marry her and have children. May she marry you and prosper.

O woman! Stop sorrowing over your dead husband. Forget him and come back to the world of the living. Marry again and have children.

I have brought back the woman who followed her husband to the cremation ground. She was weeping in sorrow. But I have brought her back to the world.

O woman! You are not yet ready to die. You know well the ways of the world. You know well the dictates of the gods. This is your new husband. Marry him and love him. That is the road to heaven.

O Agni! You have an intimate connection with the water. I sprinkle water on your flames. I pacify all the herbs through this action.

(This refers to the act of putting out the fire on the funeral pyre).

When the dead body has been completely burnt, the fire must be put out. Water must be sprinkled on the fire. Enough water must be sprinkled so that grass grows on the funeral ground again.

O man! The only energy that can light you up is the light that comes from your soul. That is the learning you must strive for.

Come. Arise. Go to the atmosphere where you will meet your dead ancestors. That is the region that is populated by the ancestors. Drink the *soma* juice that is there and be satiated.

(These words are addressed to the dead person.)

O man! May you attain superiority. Take care of your body and various parts of your anatomy so that you do not suddenly die. In this vast world that is like an ocean, go where you will. Live in the land and the country that pleases you most.

May the ancestors who drink *soma* juice grant me energy. May the gods make me complete with clarified butter. May I retain my eyesight when I am old. May I retain my ability to eat and drink when I am old. May I live for many years, may I not die before my time.

Agni will energise me with radiance. The *paramatman* which is omnipresent will invest me with wisdom. All the gods will grant me prosperity. The water that brings happiness will purify me.

The night and the day will protect me in every direction. The gods who are the destroyers of enemies will increase my prosperity. Indra will energise my two arms. The one who is the creator will grant me a long life.

The first man to be born was the son of Vivasvan. He was the first one to die and go to Yama's abode. Worship King Yama with your oblations.

(Yama is the god of death. He was the son of Vivasvan, Vivasvan being another name for Surya.)

O ancestors! You will return to your abode after the sacrifice is over. But at the sacrifice, we have offered you many oblations. Accept them and grant us foodgrains and riches. May we be prosperous and have brave sons.

The ancestors are the possessors of divine qualities. May they grant us happiness.

We will purify ourselves through our learning. May we be protected from sin and may we have long lives. May we be blessed with the best of qualities. May we have subjects and other riches.

May the acts that we have performed bring us sweet fruits. We perform this sacrifice so that we may obtain our desired objects from the ancestors. May the ancestors come to our sacrifice and accept the oblations. May they grant us happiness.

Our ancient ancestors receive their energy from the power of the sacrifice. It is this power that manifests the dawn. O Agni! Please use your power as well, so that the dawn may become manifest.

The gods are the performers of wonderful deeds. After they were born, they purified themselves through meditation. They then lit Agni's flames. The three types of Agni are the harbingers of prosperity. They purify the cows and grant us many cattle.

(The three types of Agni are explained in the introduction.)

One must be acquainted with the account of the birth of the gods. One must be acquainted with the deeds that bring the gods pleasure. Acts that please Agni are the acts that are indeed superior. If Agni is pleased, the radiant Usha will manifest herself for us. The objects that are preserved by the gods will then ensure our welfare. We must always pray and perform sacrifices so that the objects of our desire are attained.

Indra and the Maruts will protect us from all impediments in the eastern direction. They will protect us the way the earth protects the heaven above. We worship him who has created all the worlds and all the directions. We offer oblations so that the gods may be present here on earth.

Dhata will protect us from all impediments in the southern direction. Aditti and all her sons will also protect us. Soma and the other gods will protect us from all impediments in the northern direction.

The *paramatman* bears everything the way the sun bears heaven. May the *paramatman* make my body complete in every respect. I worship the *paramatman* to the east, to the south, to the north and to the west. I worship him in the upper and the lower directions. The *paramatman* brings to this world water and the breath of life.

May I be preserved from all impediments on earth. May I be preserved from all impediments after I die. It is for this reason that two separate sets of oblations are being offered. May men be blessed with divine qualities.

We chant the *mantras* that are given in the *Vedas*. May we attain riches. May our oblations reach the gods the way a learned person reaches the world of learning. May the gods be present here so that they may listen to our prayers.

If men perform sacrifices and follow the righteous path, they can purify themselves. Their deeds become immortal and they attain the radiance of the sun.

Who amongst the gods is immortal? To begin with, the gods were all mortal. They too died. But the sage Brihaspati performed a sacrifice so that the gods could be immortal. The gods conquered death. But the fruits of the sacrifice did not percolate down to the world of men. Men continue to be mortal, they die. Yama robs men of their physical bodies and brings death to them.

O Agni! You are the learned one. Make these oblations fragrant and carry them to the ancestors. May the ancestors devour these oblations. O Agni! Please partake of these oblations yourself

O ancestors! The flames of the fire have been lit on the occasion of the sacrifice. Come and be seated here and grant riches for your progeny. Nourish us with your blessings. O ancestors! Come to every house. Come to every sacrifice. Accept the oblations that are offered at sacrifices. Grant us riches and grant us brave sons.

The ancestors will come to the sacrifice at our bidding. They will listen to our prayers. They will protect us and grant us wisdom. All our ancestors, from time immemorial, will come to this sacrifice. Let us offer them *soma* juice. Let us have a plentiful supply of oblations for them.

The ancestors have become like the gods themselves. They will come to our sacrifice with Agni and the other gods. O Agni! Please bring the ancestors to this sacrifice.

There are more *suktas* in *kanda* thirteen on funeral ceremonies. There are also *suktas* on spiritual upliftment. But we move on to *kanda* fourteen.

KANDA FOURTEEN

Marriages

It is truth that makes the motherland flourish. It is the sun that makes heaven radiant.

The gods follow a constant path and the moon is constant in the sky. The offerings of *soma* juice make the gods powerful and they descend on earth. The energy of *soma* juice can be found in the stars as well.

When the *soma* herbs are crushed, it is certain that *soma* juice will be extracted and drunk. When *soma* juice is drunk, the *soma* herb does not wither away. New leaves continue to be added to the plant the way new months are added to the year. But there is a divine *soma* herb as well. No one can drink of that divine *soma* juice.

When a bride goes to the house of her husband, it is her mind that is her best ornament. It is with her mind that she attains happiness in her husband's household. The earth and heaven will shower her with happiness there. To the chanting of the *mantras* from the *Vedas*, she leaves her father's house. To the chanting of these *mantras*, she enters her husband's house. These incantations make her and her husband complete and ensure their welfare.

(The connection between *soma* juice and a bride is not at all clear. The implicit suggestion is that *soma* juice is being compared to a bride.)

The sacrifices that are performed in her husband's house constitute food for the bride. The *mantras* that are chanted there constitute her ornaments. Those who accompany the bride when she first goes to her husband's house are like the Ashvinis themselves. The one who leads the procession is like Agni. And the father of the bride is like Surya.

When the bride goes to her husband's house, she must ride on a chariot and the chariot must be drawn by two excellent bulls. If it is possible, the bulls must be white in colour. Mantras from the *Vedas* must be chanted as the chariot is driven. Hymns from the *Sama Veda* must be sung. The bride goes to her husband's house so that husband and wife may perform righteous deeds together and thus attain heaven. May the two wheels of the chariot be pure.

The cows which are offered as dowry must first be delivered to the bridegroom's house by the father of the bride. It is only after this is done that the marriage can be solemnised. For example, the cows can be sent when the *nakshatra* Magha is in the sky. And the marriage can be performed when the *nakshatra* Falguni is in the sky. The dowry which is sent to the groom's house must be sent on a chariot. And it must be escorted by two individuals who are known to be righteous in conduct. They must ascertain the correct address and deliver the dowry at the proper house. It

is these two who will subsequently lead the bridal procession to the groom's house.

After the dowry has been received, two gentlemen from the groom's house will come to the bride's house. They will ask the bride's father for the hand of the bride. These individuals must be welcomed with due respect. And all those who are present will signify their assent to the marriage. Surya was the daughter of Savita and she was married to the sun. She was driven to her husband's house in a chariot with three wheels. Every bride should go to her husband's house in a chariot. And the chariot's wheel must be excellent.

If information is required about the prospective groom, this information should be sought from those who are superior and righteous. It must never be sought from those who are inferior. Like a ripe fruit severed from the stem, the bride is severed from all relationship with her father's house. But her relationship with her husband's house must never be severed. The supreme godhead will grant happiness and welfare to the bride in her husband's house. May the bride perform righteous deeds in her husband's house.

The god who grants good fortune will hold the bride's hand when the bridal procession goes to the groom's house after the marriage is over. The Ashvins will ride on her chariot when she goes to her husband's house. May the bride be the queen of her husband's house and may she please all those who

are there. May the wife perform her duties well. May her sons be blessed with happiness.

May the husband and the wife always stay united and never be separated. May they play with their children. May their house be full of happiness. May they live through their appointed lifespans in righteous fashion.

This couple will have sons who will frisk and frolic till they grow up. When they have grown, they will perform great deeds so that they become famous throughout the world. May these offspring live to a ripe old age.

This couple will perform great deeds and become as radiant as Usha. They will perform sacrifices and offer oblations to the gods.

At the time of marriage, excellent clothing must be gifted to *brahmanas*. They must also be donated riches. The *brahmanas* will impart wisdom to the newly married couple through their blessings. If this is not done and if the *brahmanas* are angered, the couple is certain to face destruction.

If the bride is evil, blood flows in her husband's house. If the bride is evil, her father and her relations begin to live in her husband's house and the husband feels stifled, as if in a noose.

A man should never wear a woman's clothing. If he does this, his energy is reduced. A woman is best dressed when she wears three articles of clothing. An ordinary piece is used for the lower part of the body. A

decorated piece is used for the upper part of the body. And the third piece is a covering that is worn over all this.

May the couple perform righteous deeds. May they always speak the truth. May they accumulate a lot of riches. May the wife always bear love for her husband in her heart. May the husband always address the wife in pleasant tones.

May there be cows in the house, may the cows not run away. May the cows deliver calves in ever increasing numbers. May sacrifices always be performed in the household. May the gods bless the household and increase the number of cows that are there. Let the path that leads to the house be free of all impediments. Let the *paramatman* bless this household.

There is energy in the eyes, in riches and in cows. May all this energy enter the bride's body and may she be blessed. May she always follow the righteous path. Let the energy that is in water and in sacrifices enter this bride's body. May all forms of disease maintain their distance.

May the wife bring a good heart, sons, riches and good fortune to her husband. May she please her husband through her deeds. May she please her father-in-law and her brother-in-law. The ocean is the lord of the rivers. Like that, may this bride reign as a queen in her husband's household. May her mother-in-law and her sister-in-law be pleased.

People weep at the time of departure and separation. But there should be no crying and weeping when a bride leaves her father's house for her husband's. It is in fact a day of great happiness for her father and her other relations. The bride is leaving for her husband's house so that she may bring happiness there. She will perform righteous deeds there.

The groom accepts the bride's hand the way the fire accepts the earth. May the wife not come to grief. May she thrive in wealth and prosperity. The groom accepts the bride's hand for the sake of good fortune. The gods have brought these two together. May the husband and the wife live together for a hundred years. May the husband take care of his wife.

The weavers have woven excellent clothing for the bride; let her wear them. The learned *brahmanas* have given her their blessings. Indra, Agni and the other gods will bless this woman with sons. May the wife have long hair so that she may please her husband.

Let jewellery adorn the bride. Let her be adorned with flowers, vermillion and gold.

This wife is following the path that is laid down by the gods. Let her not come to any harm and let her be free from the depredations of the demons. May wisdom and learning envelope her from every direction. May she make her new home as happy as a city of the gods.

There is more in the same vein. In fact, all the *suktas* in *kanda* fourteen pertain to marriage. But we will skip these and pass on to *kanda* fifteen.

KANDA FIFTEEN

The paramatman

The *paramatman* is the creator of all objects. He is Prajapati, the lord of all objects in the universe. He is the only one. He is the one who is great and superior. He is the *brahman*. He is the one who radiates heat and he is the source of all truth.

The *paramatman* is the god of all gods, he is the greatest one. He is the supreme godhead. He is the lord of all oceans and he is the one who created Indra's bow. The *paramatman's* stomach is blue and his back is red. The learned say that with the blue part of his body he destroys hated enemies. And with the red part he destroys those who bear hatred in their hearts.

The *paramatman* became great and stood up.

"Why are you standing? Why don't you sit?" asked the gods.

"Where will I sit?" asked the *paramatman*.

The gods constructed a chair for the *paramatman* to sit on. The four legs of the chair were the four seasons of summer, spring, early autumn and the monsoon. The metres of sacred hymns were the planks for the chair and the *mantras* from the *Vedas* were the cane with which the chair was woven. The *Vedas* formed the cushions. Those who are learned know all this. The *paramatman* ascended this chair and the gods became his protectors.

The months of spring became his protector in the east, those of summer his protector in the south, those of the monsoon his protector in the west and those of early autumn his protector in the north. The months of late autumn protected him in the lower direction and those of winter protected him in the upper direction.

The god Bhava picked up his bow and became a sentinel in the east. Those who know this are protected by the gods Sharva, Bhava and Ishana. Sharva is the sentinel in the south and Pashupati the sentinel in the west. The god Ugra picked up his bow and became the sentinel in the north. Rudra is the sentinel in the lower direction and the god Mahadeva is the sentinel in the upper direction.

The *paramatman* moved downwards and Prithivi, Agni, the herbs and the trees bowed down before him. The *paramatman* moved up and Surya, Chandra and the stars bowed down before him. The *paramatman* moved in other directions and the *vedas* bowed down before him. So did the metres, the *Puranas*, the different forms of fire, and all animals. The seasons and all other objects worshipped him. The various gods showed their obeisance.

The *paramatman* is the source of *brahmanas*, *kshatriyas* and all other classes. He is the source of all foodgrains. It is he who created the *sabha* and the *samiti*, soldiers and wealth.

He who knows all this is indeed learned. Blessed is the house where he comes as a guest. Let the king

welcome such a guest for the welfare of the kingdom. Let every householder welcome such a guest. For this guest knows of the secrets of the *brahman* that vests with the great Brihaspati. And he also knows of the energy that vests with the great Indra. Let sacrifices be performed in the household when such a learned guest arrives.

There is much that is obscure in the *suktas* of *kanda* fifteen. All the *suktas* pertain to the *paramatman* and to those who are knowledgeable about the *paramatman*, particularly, wandering mendicants. We have summarised drastically and move on to *kanda* sixteen.

KANDA SIXTEEN

Charms for removing misery and ensuring victory

The water that is in the clouds has been freed. The divine fire has been freed. Let them burst forth. I use these to banish my enemies. Let those who pollute my body and my spirit be destroyed. Let assassins and arsonists be destroyed. Let those who hate me and those whom I hate be destroyed. I release the water towards the ocean so that all this may be accomplished. I release the fire that is in the water so that all this may be accomplished. I banish assassins, cannibals and others who pollute the body. May the divine water cleanse me of all pollution and sin. May I not suffer from nightmares. O divine water! Look upon me with favour. May your touch sanctify my

skin. I call upon Agni the purifier. May divine energy course through my body.

May I be blessed with the proximity of sweet speech and may my miseries be removed. May I utter sweet words. May my ears hear the sacred wisdom that ensures welfare. May I never lose my power of hearing. May my eyesight always be as sharp as that of an eagle.

May I be the possessor of cattle and a myriad of riches. May I be the leader of my peers. May. I be handsome and energetic. May I never deviate from the righteous path. May I never suffer from a shortage of food or weapons. May the water and the wind bring me pleasure. May my mind be learned and may my heart be pure. May I never know unhappiness. May my wisdom be as great as that of ocean.

I will be the lord of riches and of my peers. My *atman* is immortal. May it not forsake my body. May the breath of life not forsake my body. May the sun protect me during the day. Agni will protect me from the earth, Vayu from the atmosphere, Yama from men, and Sarasvati from all objects. May there be no one amongst men who wishes to kill me. O water! Please ensure my welfare. May I be blessed with all qualities. May I be happy night and day. May I be the owner of animals. Mitra and Varuna will grant me the breath of life. Agni will grant me energy.

O nightmares! I know well your origin. You are created by Yama and you are the son of disease. You are the herald of destruction and death. May I be protected from nightmares.

I know well the origin of nightmares. They are the sons of defeat and penury. They distort the senses and bring death. May I be protected from nightmares.

Today is the day when we will attain victory. We will achieve our goals. May we be free from all sin. O Usha! May the nightmares which scare us keep their distance. May those who hate us and those who curse us keep their distance. May those whom we hate, also keep their distance. May Usha be pleased through our prayers. May the goddess of learning also be pleased through our prayers.

May penury, misery and other ill fortune desert us and characterise our enemies. May diseases and other ailments also follow them there. May nightmares also leave us for our enemies.

O Agni! May you and the other gods remove impediments from our midst. Take them instead to our foes. May our enemies become weak, poor and miserable.

I destroy my enemies through these means. I pierce them with poverty, penury and disease. May ignorance and defeat descend on my enemies. I make them unhappy with the blessings of the gods. I light up their homes with fire. All these misfortunes will beset my enemies. May those who hate us suffer from hatred themselves. May those whom we hate also suffer from hatred.

Those who hate us will be removed from heaven, the atmosphere and the earth. O *paramatman*! I send nightmares to my foes. I send evil to my foes. May

they suffer from these through night and day. May they suffer from these whether they be sleeping or awake. I kill my enemies once they are thus weakened. Kill the enemies. Break their bones and shred their muscles. Let them die. Let them not live.

We will be victorious. We will be the ones who will be on the ascendant. Truth, energy and learning will reside with us. We will be blessed with radiance and our sacrifices will be successful. May we possess sons, subjects and animals. May our warriors be brave.

We will invade the enemies who have sinned against us. We will curse them with disease. May they be robbed of energy, strength and life. I will dislodge them from the heights they have occupied. May they be entangled in the nooses of misfortune, poverty, misery, defeat and dissolution of the senses. Brihaspati, Prajapati, the sages, the trees, the seasons, the months, the days, heaven, the earth, Indra, Agni, Mitra and Varuna, will aid me in this endeavour. The enemies will be divested of energy, beauty and life.

We will be victorious. We will be the ones who will be on the ascendant. The armies of the enemies will be repulsed. Agni and Soma have told us this. Pusha has blessed us. Our *atmans* will become radiant. The energy of the sun will merge into our bodies. We will attain prosperity, riches and learning. Our sacrifices will be successful.

Kanda sixteen is a short *kanda* and all that is there has been reproduced above. We now pass on to *kanda* seventeen.

KANDA SEVENTEEN

Prayer for victory

I pray to the gods who are strong, powerful and victorious. They triumph over their enemies. They are the lords of the earth, the senses and the cattle. They are the famous ones. I pray to the gods so that I may have a long life. May I be befriended by the gods and may I be loved by my people.

May I be loved by the animals and by my peers.

O Surya! It is time for you to rise. Rise and encircle me with energy from every direction. May those who hate me become my slaves, but may I never be enslaved. O supreme godhead! Your energy knows no bounds. May I become the possessor of cattle and be blessed with immortality. O Surya! Rise and make me kindly disposed towards the living beings that I can see, as well as those that I cannot see. May the sun never be forced to retreat. May the sun climb up into the sky and shower down happiness on us. May Surya look upon us with favour. O Indra! Grant us good fortune and protect us with your radiance from all the directions. Grant us welfare. May you ascend your throne in heaven and drink *soma* juice.

O Indra! You are victorious and learned. You are the famous one to whom we pray. You cannot be vanquished in heaven or on the earth. There is no one who can rival you in the atmosphere. Grant us happiness. Parts of your being can be found in the water, the earth and the fire. O Indra! Your energy can be found in heaven and in the atmosphere. We

pray to you and perform sacrifices in your honour. O learned one! Grant us happiness.

O god! You are the one who protects the four directions. It is your brilliance that can be seen in the sky. Bless this world of ours. Endow it with your favours. Show us the path that leads to truth.

O god! It is your energy that heats up the world. It is your energy that removes all impediments. O god! You are the great Indra. You are the greatest. You are the lord of all subjects. It is for your sake that sacrifices are performed. You are radiant and full of energy. May your energy be passed on to us.

You are radiance itself. May your radiance be passed on to us. May we attain learning and become the owners of animals. O Surya! I praise you for having risen. I worship you for having ascended the sky. I worship your dazzling energy. I worship the rising of the sun. I worship the setting of the sun.

The sun has risen in all its radiance. It will enslave our enemies, but will make sure that we are never enslaved. O god! O Surya! Great is your valour. Fulfil us with animals and confer immortality on us. Ride on a boat with many oars so that you may grant us good fortune. Cross the sky so that we may pass from day to night. The learning that we have received from Prajapati will be our armour. The energy that we have received from Surya will be our strength. We will have long lives and be energetic till we are old. Arrows that are shot towards us will not be able to kill us. We will be protected by the truth. We will be

protected by the seasons and by the elements. We will be protected by the future, untainted by sin and death. I bear these sacred words in my body. I make my body and my life pure. Agni will protect me in every direction. The sun which rises will free me from the fear of death. Radiant Usha will bless me with the breath of life.

Kanda seventeen is also a short *kanda* and all that is there has been reproduced above. We pass on to *kanda* eighteen.

KANDA EIGHTEEN

Yama

(This *kanda* begins with a conversation between Yama and his sister, Yami. In the course of this conversation, Yami wishes to marry Yama so that they may have children. Since marriage between brother and sister is not permitted, Yama refuses. We leave out the details of this conversation.)

The learned use water, air and herbs to perform all sorts of tasks. These are the three objects that can be found everywhere in the world. They encompass the earth and it is to them that many hymns have been composed.

The *paramatman* is like a fire. From heaven, he showers down water on the earth in the form of rain. Depending on the season, men use this water for different purposes. It is from the water that foodgrains are born.

The words of the *Vedas* sing the glory of the *paramatman*. It is the *paramatman* who protects us and keeps us preserved in righteousness. He is like an elder brother who teaches us wisdom. It is the *paramatman* who grants us the objects of our desire.

Men who desired to be victorious lit the fires of a sacrifice. Usha manifested herself in her radiance.

The learned light a fire on the occasion of a sacrifice. They extract *soma* juice so that it may be offered as an oblation.

Agni is as vital to a sacrifice as grass is to animals. It is Agni who grants happiness and fulfils the desires of the devotees.

The sun makes the four directions manifest. Agni makes the ancestors manifest and ensures the performance of righteous deeds.

A man who describes the glory of Agni becomes famous everywhere. He is blessed with riches, foodgrains, animals and chariots. He is brave and valorous and lives for a long time.

O Agni! Listen to the prayers we are chanting. We pray that you may bring heaven and earth to us. May there be rains through the grace of the gods. O Agni! Be a messenger between us and the gods.

(Some more hymns to Agni follow. Other gods and the ancestors are summoned to the sacrifice. These we skip.)

All living beings that are born must eventually die. They are born on earth and spend a short time here.

But after they die, they go to Yama's abode. It is for this reason that we offer oblations to Yama. It is impossible to avoid the path that leads to Yama's abode. He who is born must surely die.

We offer oblations to our ancestors so that they may protect us. May they free us from all fear and disease.

May the ancestors come to this sacrifice. May they pardon any crimes that we may have committed against our fellow men.

Yama's mother is named Saranyu. His father's name is Vivasvan. Vivasvan is another name for Surya. After the name of his father, Yama is often referred to as Vaivasvat in the *mantras* of the *Vedas*.

Our ancestors have earlier traversed the path to Yama's abode. Those who are alive will also travel along that path. May they be happy in Yama's abode.

The ancestors determine the place where the funeral rites for a dead person are to be performed. The breath of life has left the dead person's body. He no longer knows the difference between night and day. The ancestors have determined the cremation ground where the dead body has to be cremated. They have also set aside a place for the dead person in Yama's abode.

O Agni! The fire of the sacrifice has been lit and oblations have been offered. Manifest yourself and bring the ancestors here so that they may partake of

the oblations. We have offered oblations to Yama as well. We have offered oblations to his father, Vivasvan. Yama and the ancestors will come and be seated here.

Soma juice and other oblations have been offered to Yama on the occasion of the sacrifice. Sweet are the oblations that have been offered to King Yama. He will be pleased with these oblations and will grant us long lives.

As long as water is present in the dead body, the *atman* does not leave it and go elsewhere. It hovers around the dead body. When the dead body is burnt by fire, the water disappears. And the *atman* is freed from the shackles of the dead body to go and meet the ancestors.

Yama has two dogs that guard the path to his abode. They are terrible of appearance and have four eyes each. May those who are still alive be blessed by these dogs. These dogs have long noses and they live on the breath of life. They are exceedingly strong and pursue those who traverse the path to Yama's abode.

Yama and Yami were the children of Saranyu. When Saranyu was in the form of a mare, she had two other children. These were the Ashvinis.

O Agni! There are four ways to dispose of a dead body. It may be buried in the ground, floated in the water, cremated by fire, or left on the ground to nature.

When a man is about to die, Yama and his ancestors come down to earth. They wish to take the

dead person's *atman* to heaven. The *atman* can also travel to Yama's abode. That is a wonderful place and only those who are deserving can go there. In Yama's abode there are several sections. A section is determined for the *atman* depending on the acts that were performed on earth by the person concerned.

It is Yama who, through his powers, bears the ancestors in the atmosphere. Yama is the one who is familiar with the end that will eventually come. O men! Offer oblations to Yama so that he may befriend you and grant you long lives.

May the dead person's *atman* be happy in Yama's abode. We offer sesamum seeds so that the path to Yama's abode may be free of impediments.

There is a lack of continuity in the hymns of this *kanda*. Hymns to Yama are interspersed with hymns to the ancestors, to Agni and to the other gods. There is also a lot that is repetitive. But we have reproduced all the information that there is about Yama. We therefore pass on to *kanda* nineteen.

KANDA NINETEEN

A sacrifice

The rivers flow, the winds blow. The birds fly in the sky. This sacrifice will increase my power of speech. I offer the oblations that will be a source of happiness.

O powers of the sacrifice! Ensure that this sacrifice may be a success. O waters that flow! Ensure that this

sacrifice is protected. The words that I utter sing of the glory of this sacrifice. I offer the oblations that will be a source of happiness.

All the devotees who are taking part in this sacrifice will be protected, no matter what their form or age. The four directions will chant the glory of this sacrifice. I offer the oblations that will be a source of happiness.

Water

May the water that flows down from the snow-clad mountains bring you happiness. May the water that flows in the rivers bring you happiness. May the swift-flowing streams bring you happiness. May the water of the monsoon bring you happiness.

May the water of the desert bring you happiness. May the water that flows in this kingdom bring you happiness. May the water that is dug up out of the ground bring you happiness. May the water that is kept in pots bring you happiness.

There are those who know how to use water in the treatment of ailments. Such people are learned and , to them, water is a source of power.

There is water that showers down from the sky. There is water that flows in the streams. If this water is used properly, horses thrive. (This suggests that water was used not only to treat human ailments, but that of horses as well.)

Water is the object that guarantees our welfare. Water banishes all our ailments. Water increases our

happiness. May water cure all your diseases. Acknowledge the power of water.

Agni

Agni is to be found in heaven, in the earth and in the atmosphere. Agni is also to be found in the trees and the herbs. Agni is praised, no matter what the source. May Agni grace us by his presence.

O Agni! It is your glory that is found in the water, the forests, the herbs and the animals. Bring all this energy together and come to us. May you always be with us and may you grant us riches.

You are famous among the gods as a source of happiness. Your presence can be detected in the ancestors and in the earth. O Agni! May your powers of sustenance be present among men. Use your powers to grant us riches.

It is worth praying to one who has ears. It is worth praying to one who is learned and deserving of respect. It is for these reasons that I am praying to you. O Agni! Grant me words and speech. Grant me freedom from all fear. Pacify the anger of the gods.

Oblations

The sage Atharvan was the first one to light a fire and offer oblations. He was the first one to worship the learned Agni. Agni accepted those oblations and that was the beginning of all sacrifices. I too offer oblations to the famous Agni. May Agni accept my oblations.

I pray to the goddess who grants all wishes. She is like a mother to my mind and she will remove all my impediments. Whatever be the direction I travel in, may all my desires be satisfied. May the goddess who grants all wishes look upon me with favour.

O Brihaspati! Use the power of your will to come to me. You are the one who should be summoned according to the prescribed rites. Come to me and grant me good fortune.

Brihaspati was born in the line of the great sage Angirasa. May Brihaspati become acquainted with the power of my words. May he learn what my wishes are. Brihaspati is the one who dwells with all the gods. May he listen to my prayers and grant me my wishes.

The paramatman

There is one who is the lord of all animals, birds and men. There is one who is the lord of Indra and the other gods. He alone is the lord of all the various objects that can be found on earth. He is the one who is the source of all riches. Pray to him if you wish to acquire riches.

The *paramatman* alone is the lord of all that is mobile and immobile. He is the lord of all objects.

The *paramatman* has a thousand arms, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet. He surrounds the earth from the four directions. But the entire earth is merely equivalent to ten of the *paramatman's* fingers.

Three-fourths of the *paramatman* are to be found in heaven. The remaining one-fourth can be found on earth in the form of all that is sentient and insentient, all that eats and does not eat.

Wonderful is the *paramatman's* greatness. One-fourth of his body constitutes all the elements that can be found on earth. The remaining three-fourths are immortal in heaven.

Everything that has been created is in the *paramatman*. Everything that will be created is also in the *paramatman*. The *paramatman* is the lord of immortality.

Who amongst all those who are learned can describe the nature of the *paramatman*? How can one describe his mouth or his arms? How can one describe his thighs or his feet?

The *brahmanas* are like the *paramatman's* mouth. The *kshatriyas* are his arms, the *vaishyas* his waist, and the *shudras* his legs.

It is the mind of the *paramatman* that created the moon. The sun was born out of his eyes. His mouth gave birth to Indra and Agni. His breath of life created Vayu.

The *paramatman's* navel created the atmosphere. Heaven was made out of this great being's head. The earth was born from his feet and his ears gave birth to the directions. Other worlds were created from other parts of the *paramatman's* anatomy.

(There are a few more verses on the *paramatman* which we skip.)

The *nakshatras*

I sing the praise of the *nakshatras* that decorate heaven. They are always on the move, but they never decay. They are the swift ones who destroy all evil. For the sake of divine happiness, I sing the praise of these constant stars.

O Agni! I pray so that the *nakshatras* Krittika and Rohini may grant me happiness. May the *nakshatra* Mrigashira ensure my welfare and may the *nakshatra* Ardra grant me peace. Punarvasu *nakshatra* will increase my happiness and Pushya *nakshatra* will develop my power of speech. May the *nakshatras* Ashlesha and Magha manifest themselves and elevate me.

May the two *nakshatras* known as Purva Falguni lead me along the righteous path. (The two *nakshatras* are actually named Purva Falguni and Uttara Falguni.) May the *nakshatras* Hasta and Chitra bring me welfare. Svati *nakshatra* will grant me happiness and the *nakshatras* Radha and Vishakha will listen to my prayers. The *nakshatras* Anuradha, Jyeshtha and Mula will preserve me from all manner of destruction.

The *nakshatra* Purva Ashada will grant me foodgrains and the *nakshatra* Uttara Ashada will grant me strength. The *nakshatra* Abhijit will ensure that I am always righteous. I pray to the *nakshatras*

Shravana and Shravishtha so that I may be nourished.

Shatabhisha is a great *nakshatra* and will grant me riches. The two *nakshatras* that are known as Proshthapada will ensure my happiness. The *nakshatras* Revati and Ashvayuga will grant me riches and Bharani *nakshatra* will ensure my prosperity.

(Traditionally, there are twenty-seven *nakshatras* spread along the line of the Zodiac. Their names are Ashvini, Bharani, Krittika, Rohini, Mrigashira, Ardra, Punarvasu, Pushya, Ashlesha, Magha, Purva Falguni, Uttara Falguni, Hasta, Chitra, Svati, Vishakha, Anuradha, Jyeshtha, Mula, Purva Ashada, Uttara Ashada, Shravana, Dhanishtha, Shatabhisha, Purva Bhadrapada, Uttara Bhadrapada and Revati. When Abhijit is included as well, the number of *nakshatras* increases to twenty-eight. The list of *nakshatras* given above is however twenty-nine. Ashvayuga is obviously Ashvini, Shravishtha is Dhanishtha, and Proshthapada is Bhadrapada. The extra *nakshatra* turns out to be Radha.)

The *nakshatras* can be seen in heaven, in the atmosphere, in the water, on earth, in mountain ranges and in the various directions. The moon enjoys them one by one. May all these *nakshatras* bring me welfare and happiness.

(The moon progressively passes through each of these *nakshatras* in the sky. According to legends, the moon is also married to the *nakshatras*.)

Let the twenty-eight *nakshatras* ensure my welfare and happiness. May they be united with me. I pray to them, night and day.

May the time of sunset ensure my welfare. May dawn bring me happiness. May evening also bring me happiness. May the day make me happy. May all animals and birds be happy. O Agni! Let these prayers ensure happiness. You are the immortal one. Be pleased and come here.

O Savita! You are the lord of everything. May I never suffer from vanity, strife, slander, hatred and disease. May my pots never be empty.

May sin keep its distance. May I always eat food that is pure. O sin! You will be insulted. We are the ones that tread along the righteous path.

O Brahmanaspati! The winds blow in various directions. O Indra! Make the winds blow along the proper paths. May they bring us happiness.

May our welfare be ensured. May we know freedom from fear. I pray to the day and to the night.

Peace

May heaven grant peace. May the earth grant peace. May the wide atmosphere grant peace. May the waves on the water grant peace. May the herbs bring us peace.

May the acts that we have performed, and the acts we are yet to perform, grant peace. May the past and the future grant peace. May everything that there is bring us peace.

The goddess of learning resides in the most sacred of-places. Her energy enables her to perform terrible deeds. May she grant us peace.

We possess five senses. The mind is like a sixth sense and is located in the heart. It is energised through the power of learning and can perform wonderful deeds. May all these senses grant us peace.

May Mitra bring us happiness. May Varuna bring us happiness. May Vishnu and Prajapati bring us happiness. May Indra, Brihaspati and Aryama grant us peace.

Mitra and Varuna will grant us peace. Vivasvan will grant us peace. The one who is the destroyer will grant us peace. The impediments that are there on earth and in the atmosphere will grant us peace. The planets which travel in heaven will grant us peace.

The earth will grant us peace. The meteors which have fallen on earth will grant us peace. Cows which yield milk as red as blood will grant us peace. The ground which is cracked and parched will grant us peace.

Stars which have been flung out by meteors will grant us peace. The invasion of the enemies will grant us peace. The acts of assassins will grant us peace. All violent deeds will be pacified and will grant us peace. Bad omens will grant us peace.

The moon and the planets will grant us peace. The sun will grant us peace. Comets and death will grant us peace. The terrible Rudra will grant us peace.

The Vasus will grant us peace. The Adityas will grant us peace. Agni will grant us peace. All the gods and the sages will grant us peace. Brihaspati will grant us peace.

Brahma, Prajapati, Dhata and all the worlds will lead us on the path to happiness. The four *Vedas* will lead us on the path to happiness. The seven great sages will lead us on the path to happiness. Agni will lead us on the path to happiness. Indra and Brahma will grant us happiness. All the gods will grant us happiness.

The seven great sages know about all that is peaceful in the universe. May they instruct us on the way to attain peace. May we be peaceful. May we know freedom from fear.

The earth will grant us peace, the atmosphere will grant us peace; heaven will grant us peace. Water will grant us peace. The herbs and the trees will grant us peace. May all the gods grant us peace. Let there be peace everywhere; let the universe be full of peace. May all that is violent, cruel and terrible be banished. May all the sin be banished and may everything be peaceful. May there be welfare everywhere. May there be peace everywhere.

There are more *suktas* on peace in this *kanda*. There are prayers for obtaining protection and freedom from fear. Some *suktas* are devoted to charms and prayers to specific gods. There are prayers for removing ailments and bad dreams. But we move on to *kanda* twenty.

Kanda twenty is the last *kanda* of the *Atharva Veda Samhita*. Although it contains a few *suktas* addressed to Agni, Surya, the Maruts and Brihaspati, the bulk of the *suktas* in this *kanda* are devoted to Indra.

KANDA TWENTY

Indra

O Indra! You are the one who is strong. We have extracted *soma* juice for your sake. We call upon you to come and drink this sweet juice.

O Maruts! You are as powerful and valiant as heaven itself. Protect our houses and our places of sacrifice so that we become invincible. You are the protectors.

We pray to the great god Agni. The grain that has been carted by bulls is his food. The milk and clarified butter that has been obtained from cows are his food. It is to the learned Agni that oblations of *soma* juice are offered. It is for him that our hymns are chanted.

We are like the grandsons of Indra. We have recited beautiful hymns and prepared *soma* juice according to the rites of the season. May the Maruts come here and drink the *soma* juice that we have offered.

We have lit the fire of the sacrifice. We have recited excellent *mantras*. Let Agni come here and drink the *soma* juice we have offered.

The *soma* juice has been prepared according to the rites of the season. Beautiful hymns have been chanted. Let Indra and Brahma come and drink the *soma* juice.

The *soma* juice has been extracted according to the rites of the season. Beautiful hymns have been chanted. May the god of all riches come and drink the *soma* juice.

O Indra! Come here. It is for you that this juice has been extracted. Drink the *soma* juice that we have offered. And be seated on the throne we have reserved for you.

O Inara! Your steeds have long hair and are learned. May they bring you here to the sacrifice. Come close and listen to the hymns we are chanting.

O Indra! Our learned priests are offering this *soma* juice on the occasion of the sacrifice. You are the drinker of the *soma* juice. You are the wielder of the *vajra*. We are summoning you so that you may come here.

O Indra! You are the one who is dressed in beautiful clothing. We are the ones who have extracted the *soma* juice. Come to us. Listen to the prayers we are chanting. Drink the juice we have offered.

O Indra! We sprinkle the *soma* juice on your lap. Let the *soma* juice course down your body and please you. Taste the sweet *soma* juice with your tongue.

You are the one who grants myriad gifts. May you find this *soma* juice to be sweet. May your body find

this *soma* juice to be sweet. May this *soma* juice bring peace to your heart.

O Indra! You are the skilled performer of wonderous deeds. This *soma* juice has been mixed with the milk of cows. May it unite with you the way a wife is united with her husband.

Indra is the one who possesses a strong neck. Indra is the one with a rotund stomach, thick with fat. Indra is the possessor of strong arms. This *soma* juice will inspire Indra to kill the demon Vritra.

O Indra! Advance. Through your powers you have become the lord of the universe. You are the destroyer of the demon Vritra. Kill the demons.

O Indra! You hold a rod in your hand and you use this to grant riches to your devotees. May the rod be long. Grant riches to the devotees who are performing this sacrifice.

O Indra! This *soma* juice has been extracted for you. It has been strained and kept on a seat. Run and come here. Drink the *soma* juice.

You are the one who possesses powerful cows. You are the one who is worshipped by those who are powerful. You are the one who vanquishes all enemies. O Indra! It is for your pleasure that this *soma* juice has been prepared. It is you who are being summoned to the sacrifice.

O Indra! You are as strong as a horned bull. Your strength never wanes. Your strength never diminishes. You are the one who preserves and

protects. I use your power to stabilise and pacify my mind.

O Indra! You are the strong one. After preparing the *soma* juice, we are calling upon you. Come and drink the tasty *soma* juice.

You are the one who is praised by many. You are the one who provides the inspiration for action. May you desire the *soma* juice. May it satiate you once you have drunk it. May the *soma* juice make you strong.

O Indra! You are the one who has been praised. You are the lord of all the subjects. Our sacrifice has been blessed with riches. Come with all the gods and increase the glory of our sacrifice.

O Indra! You are the one who preserves those who are righteous. This is the shining *soma* juice that has been extracted. It brings pleasure. May this *soma* juice be able to reach you.

O Indra! This *soma* juice is worthy of being accepted. Fill your stomach with this juice. This is the *soma* juice that can be found in heaven. It belongs to you.

O Indra! You are the one who deserves to be worshipped. Drink the juice that we have prepared. It is this sweet juice that spurs you to all movement. It is you who will grant us fame.

May Indra grant unlimited riches to his devotees. May he who drinks *soma* juice attain greatness.

O Indra! You are the destroyer of the demon Vritra. Come to us, be you far or near. Accept the offerings we have made and listen to our prayers.

O Indra! We call upon you, be you far or near. We call upon you from the innermost recesses of our being. Come to us.

O Surya! You are prosperous and as strong as a bull. Rise so that Indra may come here. Indra is the one who brings welfare to mankind. He is the skilful wielder of the *vajra*.

Indra is the one who destroys enemies through his strength. Indra is the one who demolishes the fortresses of the enemies. Indra is the one who killed the snake Vritra.

Indra is like a friend to us and he will ensure our welfare. He will grant us horses, cows, grain and riches. He will ensure that our cows yield a plentiful supply of milk.

O Indra! You have drunk the *soma* juice earlier. Drink it again. May this juice bring you pleasure. Listen to the hymns and prayers we are chanting. May they increase your power. Manifest the sun and grant us foodgrains. O Indra! Destroy our enemies. Make the rays of the sun radiate out.

Come here. You are the one who desires the *soma* juice. The juice is ready. Drink it and be pleased. The strong one has been summoned. He will fill his stomach with *soma* juice. He will listen to our prayers like a father listens to his son.

The pot of *soma* juice is full. It is being offered to you according to the prescribed rites. This pot of *soma* juice is for your pleasure. May the *soma* juice surround Indra from the four directions.

There are many more *suktas* addressed to Indra. But this sample will suffice.

With the end of *kanda* twenty, we also come to the end of the *Atharva Veda Samhita*. As you will have realised, there are many parts that we have skipped. We have only been able to give you a limited idea of what there is in the *Atharva Veda*. You will probably also have realised that there are many parts where alternative interpretations are possible. The *Atharva Veda* is not very straightforward and our interpretations need not necessarily be the correct ones. If you have been stimulated, this is reason enough for you to read the entire *Atharva Veda* in the original.

GLOSSARY

adhvaryu	- reciter at a sacrifice
ahavaniya	- type of fire
amrita	- heavenly drink that confers immortality
antariksha	- the atmosphere
anuvaka	- lesson
apsara	- celestial nymph, dancer of heaven
arani	- stick used to generate a fire
aranyaka	- sacred text
asura	- demon
atman	- human soul
ayana	- period of six months
bhakti	- devotion
brahman	- the divine essence
brahmana	- commentary on a veda, also a priest
dakshina	- sacrificial fee
dakshinagni	- type of fire
dasa	- slave
dharma	- righteousness
diksha	- initiation
dvapara yuga	- era
dyuloka	- heaven
garhapatya	- type of fire
gayatri	- a metre

ghrita	- clarified butter
guna	- quality
notri	- officiating priest at a sacrifice
jagati	- a metre
jnana	- knowledge
kali yuga	- era
karma	- action
kshatriya	- warrior
kusha	- sacrificial grass
loka	- region
manasa	- spirit
mandala	- book
mani	- jewel or amulet
mantra	- incantation
masa	- month
muhurta	- unit of time, 48 minutes
nakshatra	- star
nishada	- hunter
paksha	- fortnight
panis	- robbers
papa	- sin
paramatman	- divine soul, the supreme - godhead
parameshvara	- the supreme godhead
pavamana	- that which has been purified
pitris	- ancestors
prithivi	- the earth
punya	- good deed

purana	- sacred text
purodasha	- cake
purusha	- origin of the universe, supreme soul
rajas	- quality of passion
rakshasa	- demon
ratri	- night
rik	- incantation
rishi	- seer, sage
ritu	- season
sabha	- assembly
sama	- sweet song or hymn
samhita	- part of a Veda consisting of incantations
samiti	- assembly
sattva	- quality of truth
satya yuga	- era
shakha	- branch or school
shastra	- sacred text
shraddha	- faith, respect or devotion
shruti	- revelation
shudra	- a serving class
soma	- juice of a herb
sukta	- hymn
suparna	- eagle
tamas	- quality of darkness
treta yuga	- era
trishtupa	- metre

udgatri	- chorister at a sacrifice
upanishad	- sacred text
vaishya	- trader
vajra	- Indra's weapon
vanaspati	- tree
veda	- knowledge
Veda	- sacred text
virat	- female counterpart of purusha
vrata	- religious rite
vrihati	- metre
yaj	- to sacrifice
yajna	- sacrifice
yoga	- union, technique of meditation that seeks to attain union between the human soul and the divine essence
yupa	- sacrificial post

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